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JANUARY 1919.

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BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

NEW YORK:
THE LEONARD SCOTT PUBLICATION CO.
[illegible]
249 WEST 13TH STREET.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS, EDINBURGH.

Entered at the New York Post-Office as second-class matter.

Entered as second-class matter, July 8, 1817, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879

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BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

No. MCCXXXIX. JANUARY 1919. Vol. CCV.

450 MILES TO FREEDOM.

BY CAPTAIN M. A. B. JOHNSTON and CAPTAIN K. D. YEARSLEY.

CHAPTER I.

"Il n'y a pas trois officiers." Such was the memorable epigram by which Sherif Bey, Turkish Captain of the Prisoners of War guard at Kastamoni, and a man regardless of detail, announced to us that four officers, whose escape has already been described in 'Maga,'[1] had got safely away from the Camp. Those of us who knew that the attempt was being made were anxiously awaiting the news. To others it came as a great surprise. Captain Keeling does not, for obvious reasons, name any one who helped them. Now it does not matter.

Officers sang loudly and long to prevent the nearest sentry from hearing the noise of rusty nails being pulled out of a door not many feet away from him, though hidden from view. More metaphorical dust was thrown in this wretched man's eyes and ears by the incorrigible James, who, during these critical moments, described to him, in very inadequate Turkish, but with a sense of humour equal to any occasion, the working parts of a petrol motor engine. Another helper was an orderly, Gunner Prosser, R.F.A., a remarkable man with a passion for wandering about in the dark. The thought of spending a quiet night sleeping in his prisoners' quarters was repellent to him. As far as we could make out, he never missed a night's prowl. A fez, a false beard, and a civilian overcoat were the only "props" he used. This was undoubtedly the man

[1] "An Escape from Turkey in Asia." By Captain E. H. Keeling. 'Blackwood's Magazine,' May 1918.

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to help Keeling's party out of the town, for the by-streets were better known to Prosser in the dark than they were to other prisoners by daylight. Accordingly he led the four officers out of Kastamoni. Some one, however, must have seen and suspected them, for less than three-quarters of an hour after their start the alarm was given. Shots were fired and the camp suddenly bristled with sentries. Through this cordon Prosser had to get back to his quarters. A Turkish sergeant, into whom he ran full tilt, was knocked over backwards. Followed by revolver shots from the angry *chaouse*, Prosser darted up one side street, doubled on his tracks by another, and by his own private entrance reached his quarters in safety. Here he disposed of his beard and fez, shaved off his moustache in the dark, and got into bed. When a few moments later Captain Sherif Bey came round to feel the hearts of all the orderlies, Prosser could hardly be roused from an innocent sleep, and his steady heart-beats allayed all suspicion as to the part he had played.

The effect of the escape of these four officers on our camp was considerable. We were confined to our houses without any exercise for ten days; sentries were more than trebled, on the principle of locking the stable door. This, however, did not affect Prosser, who took his nightly walks as usual. Our Commandant, Colonel Fettah Bey, was dismissed in disgrace and replaced by a Sami Bey, whose rank corresponded with that of a Brigadier-General. Now came rumours of the closing down of the camp at Kastamoni and a move to Changri—a mere village about eighty miles due south of us. Keeling's party escaped on August 8, 1917. Each day that followed Sherif Bey brought us official news of their capture in different parts of Asia Minor. One was reminded of Mark Twain's stolen white elephant. The marching powers of the four officers must have been phenomenal, and sometimes they covered hundreds of miles in a few hours. Confined to our houses, we amused ourselves taking bets with the Turkish sentries, who were convinced that the fugitives would be brought back to Kastamoni within a week. In their opinion those who had escaped were madmen. What could be more delightful than the life they were running away from—one could sit quietly in a chair all day smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee, far away from the detested war,—assuredly they were quite mad! Now it was unwise to bet, because when we lost we paid up, and when the Turks lost they did not feel in any way bound to do so. Our first commandant, Colonel Tewfik Bey, betted heavily on the war ending before Christmas 1916. He went on the doubling system. On losing his bet he deferred payment and doubled his bet for a later date, till by the time he lost his job as commandant he had mortgaged most of Turkey.

One half of the prisoners at Kastamoni moved to Changri

on September 27, 1917, the other half about ten days later. Three weeks before the departure of the first party we were told to be ready to move in a few days' time. Preparations were made, rooms dismantled, and home-made beds, tables, and chairs pulled to bits for convenience of transport—kit and crockery were packed, and all of us were living in a state of refined discomfort, when we were told that the move had been postponed, due to lack of available mules and carts. Some of us set to work to rebuild beds and chairs, others resigned themselves to fate and were content to sleep on the floor and sit on boxes. If we remember aright, there were two postponements.

At last the day of leaving Kastamoni really did arrive. We had been promised so many carts and so many mules, and had made our arrangements accordingly. At the last moment we were told that fewer carts and mules had rolled up. This meant leaving something behind, or marching the whole way—one decided for oneself. Many of us marched every step to Changri. Our departure took place at 1 P.M., and a weird procession we must have looked—carts and mules loaded high with all manner of furniture, stoves and stove-pipes sticking out in all directions.

The poor Greeks of the town were very sad to see us go. The Rev. Harold Spooner, through the Greek priests, had been able from time to time to distribute to these destitute people fair sums of money, supplied by voluntary subscription among the prisoners. In addition to this, families of little children used to be fed daily by some messes, and so we were able, in a small way, to relieve the want of a few unhappy Christians. Before we left Kastamoni the Padre showed us a letter which he had received from the head Greek Priest, thanking us for having helped the poor. We had, he said, kept families together, and young girls from going on the streets, and he assured us that it would be a privilege of the Greek community to look after the small graveyard we had made for the six officers and men who had died while we were there.

By 2 P.M. we were clear of Kastamoni. The change of camp would be a great break in the monotony of our existence, and for the time being we were happy. The journey was to take four days. Of a night we halted near water at a suitable camping-ground by the roadside, and in the early morning started off again. A healthy life, and a great holiday for us. For the first two days the scenery was magnificent, as we crossed the forest-covered Hilgas range, but as we approached our destination the country became more and more barren. On the fourth day, coming over a crest, we saw the village of Changri huddling at the foot of a steep bare hill. We went through the village, and a mile beyond us stood our future home. A dirty-looking, two-storied square building it was, surrounded on three sides by level fields edged with a few willows. On its west

front the ground rose a little to the main Angora road. As we neared the barracks we came across sixty graves, which looked fairly new. This gave a bad impression of the place at the start. On entering we were too dumbfounded to speak, and here it may be added that it took a lot to dumbfound us. The square inside the buildings was full of sheep and goats, and the ground was consequently filthy. The lower-storey rooms, which were to be our mess-rooms, had been used for cattle, and the cellar pointed out to us as our kitchen was at least a foot deep in manure. Only one wing of the barracks had window panes, and these were composed of small bits of glass rudely fitted together—truly a depressing place.

Many of us elected to sleep that night in the square in preference to the filthier barrack-rooms. The sanitary arrangements were beyond words. Next morning we set to work cleaning up, but it was weeks before the place was habitable. Another great inconvenience was that for many days drinking water had to be fetched in buckets from the village over a mile away, but for this the Turks finally provided a water-cart.

It was at Changri that most of the twenty-five officers who escaped from Yozgad on August 7, 1918, made up their parties. Our party, only six at that time, consisted of Captain A. B. Haig, 24th Punjabis, Captain R. A. P. Grant, 112th Infantry, Captain V. S. Clarke, 2nd Batt. Royal West Kent Regt., Captain J. H. Harris, 1/4 Hampshire Territorials, and the two authors. Throughout the remainder of our narrative these six will be denoted by their respective nicknames: Old Man, Grunt, Nobby, Perce, Johnny, and Looney.

Roughly speaking, there were four alternative directions open to us. Northwards to the Black Sea, a distance of a hundred miles; eastwards to the Russian front, 250 to 350 miles; to the Mediterranean, 300 miles southward; or 400 miles westward. Compared to the others the distance to the Black Sea was small, but outweighing this advantage was the fact that Keeling's party had got away in that direction, and the coast would be carefully guarded if another escape took place. The position of the Russian front, so far as we knew, was anything up to 350 miles away, and the country to the east of us was very mountainous. In addition, an escape in that direction would entail getting through the Turkish fighting lines, which we thought would prove very difficult. The Salt Desert, at least 150 miles across, frightened us off thinking of the southern route. The remaining one was westward: it was the longest distance to go, it is true, but for this very reason we hoped the Turks would not suspect us of trying it. The valleys ran in the direction we should be travelling, and if we did reach the coast, it was possible that we might get in touch with one of the islands in Allied hands. Having made up our minds, we sent code messages home to find out which would be

the best island to make for in the following early summer. We also asked for reduced maps to cover our route from Changri to the island on which they decided, and requested that look-outs should be posted on it in case we signalled from the coast.

Shortly after we had made our decision the question of giving parole cropped up. To any one who gave it the Turks offered a better camp and more liberty. It was a question for each to decide for himself, and we did so. On the 22nd November 1917, therefore, seventy-seven officers went off to Geddos. It was very sad parting from many good friends, and when the last cart disappeared round the spur of the hill, one turned away wondering if one would ever see them again. There were still forty-four officers and about twenty-eight orderlies in Changri. These officers were moved into the north wing of the barracks, and there they remained for the next four and a half months. At this period we had a great financial crisis—none of us had any money, prices were very high, and it came to tightening our belts a little. Our long and badly-built barrack-rooms were very draughty, and as we had no money, there was not much likelihood of getting firewood. Some cheerful Turk kindly told us that the winter at Changri was intensely cold, and that the temperature often went below zero. Altogether the prospect for the next few months was anything but pleasant.

During our most depressed moments, however, we could always raise a smile over the thought that we were "the honoured guests of Turkey." Enver Pasha himself had told us so at Mosul, where we halted on our 400-mile march across the desert after the fall of Kut-el-Amarah. So it must have been true.

At the time we write this unscrupulous adventurer, Enver—a man of magnetic personality and untiring in his energy to further his personal schemes—has but lately fled to Caucasia. He is a young man, and having held a position of highest authority in Turkey for some years, presumably a rich one. Doubtless he will lead a happy and prosperous existence for many years to come.

There are thousands of sad hearts in England and in the Indian Empire to-day, and hundreds of thousands in Turkey itself, as a result of the utter disregard for human life entertained by this man and a few of his colleagues. Of the massacre of Armenians we will not speak, although we have seen their dead bodies, although we have met their little children dying of starvation on the roadsides, and have passed by their silent villages; but we should fail in our duty to the men of the British Empire who died in captivity in Turkey did we not appeal for a stern justice to be meted out to those responsible for their dying.

It may perhaps be said with truth that it was no studied cruelty on the part of the Turkish authorities that was

the cause of the death of so many brave men who had given themselves to the work of their country: yet with equal truth it may be said that it was the vilest form of apathy and of wanton neglect. Where the taking of a little trouble by the high officials at Constantinople would have saved the lives of thousands of British and Indian soldiers, that trouble was never taken. Weak with starvation and sick with fever and dysentery (we speak of the men of Kut), they were made to march five hundred miles in the burning heat across waterless deserts without regular or sufficient rations and without transport —in many cases without boots, which had been exchanged for a few mouthfuls of food or a drink of water.

We officers, who had not such a long march as the men, and who were given a little money and some transport, thought ourselves in a bad way—what of the men who had none? There were no medical arrangements, and those who could not march fell by the desert paths and died. The official White Book gives the number 65 as the percentage of deaths amongst British soldier prisoners taken at Kut, a figure which speaks for itself.

It is a law of the world's civilisation that if a man take the life of another, except in actual warfare, he must pay forfeit with his own life. Take away bribery and corruption and that law holds good in Turkey. Now when a soldier is taken prisoner he ceases to be an active enemy, and the country of his captors is as responsible for his welfare as for that of her own citizens. What if that country so fails to grasp the responsibility, that its prisoners are allowed to die by neglect? Should not its rulers be taught such a lesson that it will be impossible for the rulers of its future generations to forget that lesson?

It is no real use to obtain evidence of a cruel corporal at that prisoners' camp or bestial Commandant at this, and to think that by punishing them we have avenged our dead. These men are underlings. The men we must punish first are those few in high authority, who by an inattention to their obvious duty have made it possible for their menials to be guilty of worse than murder.

We pride ourselves on the fact that we are citizens of the most just country of the earth. Let us see to it that justice is not starved.

CHAPTER II.

With the departure of the party for Geddos, the camp at Changri did what little they could to render the long bare barrack-rooms somewhat more endurable as winter quarters. Each room was about 80 feet in length, and consisted of a central passage bordered on either side by a row of ugly timber posts supporting the roof. Between the passage

and a row of lockers which ran along the walls, were raised platforms affording about six feet of useful width. Each platform was divided in two by a single partition halfway along the room. Viewed from one end the general effect resembled that of stables, to which use indeed all the lower rooms had been put previous to our arrival. Each length of platform was allotted to a group of three or four officers, who were then at liberty to beautify their new homes as ingenuity might suggest. Planks were hard to come by, so for the most part old valises, blankets, and curtains were strung from post to post to screen the "rooms" from the passage, and thereby gain for the occupants a little privacy.

As the severity of the winter increased caulking floor-boards became a profitable occupation, for an icy draught now swept up through the gaping cracks. By the time the financial difficulties to which we have referred were at an end, it was no longer possible to obtain in the bazaar a sufficient quantity of firewood for anything except our kitchen stoves. It was not, however, until snow was lying deep upon the ground, that Sami Bey could be prevailed upon to let us cut down a few of the neighbouring willow-trees, for which it need hardly be said we had to pay heavily. Apart from the exercise thus obtained—and it was good exercise carrying the wood into the barracks—an odd visit or two to the bazaar and a few hours tobogganing as a concession on Christmas day were the only occasions on which we saw the outside of our dwelling-place for three long months. Nor was there anything in the way of comfort within. The number of trees allotted to us was small, and the daily wood ration we allowed ourselves only sufficed to keep the stoves going in our rooms for a few hours each day. The fuel, moreover, being green, was difficult to keep alight, so that we spent many hours that winter blowing at the doors of stoves. And the stoker on duty had to give the fire his undivided attention if he wished to avoid the sarcastic comments of his chilled companions. It was a special treat reserved for Sundays to have our stoves burning for an hour in the afternoon. For over a month the temperature remained night and day below freezing-point, and the thermometer on one occasion registered 36 degrees of frost.

But enough of the miseries of that winter: in spite of such unfavourable conditions the camp was a cheerful one. We were all good friends, and united in our determination not to knuckle under to the Turk. Our senior officer, Colonel A. Moore of the 66th Punjabis, was largely instrumental in making our lot an easier one. This he did by fighting our many battles against an unreasonable and apathetic commandant, and in all our schemes for escape he gave us his sound advice and ready support.

Ours claimed to have been

the first party formed with a view to escape, but it was not long before there were several others, and it became evident that some plan would have to be devised by which a large number might hope to make their way out of the barracks fairly simultaneously. Since these had been designed for Turkish soldiers, every window was already barred. We were, moreover, a camp of suspects, who had refused to give their parole, so at night, in addition to sentries being posted at every corner, visiting patrols went round the building at frequent intervals. Three or four fellows, of course, might cut the bars of a window and slip through, but hardly five or six parties. At this moment an old American magazine came into our hands containing an article which described how thirty or forty Federal officers had escaped from a Confederate prison by means of a tunnel. This was at once recognised as the ideal solution of our problem, if only we could find a suitable outlet and the means of disposing the earth.

While the general plan was still under discussion, we were reinforced by the arrival of three officers from Geddos, who had there refused to give their parole in spite of the Turks' threat that they would be moved to Changri if they did not change their minds. Here, then, they arrived one cold December morning, looking very racy in their check overcoats supplied to them by the Dutch Legation. These coats were doubtless the last word in Constantinople fashions, and in the shop windows had probably been marked "Très civilisé." Amongst the three was one Tweedledum, so named for a certain rotundity of figure, which even the scanty provisions said to be obtainable in Geddos had failed to reduce. From his lips we first heard of the wonderful capabilities of the Handley-Page passenger aeroplane. Such machines, he said, could carry fifteen to sixteen passengers, and three of them had recently flown from England to Mudros with only one intermediate landing in Italy. The pilot of one of them had been a prisoner with him at Geddos. A few evenings later Nobby had a great brain-wave; fetching a 'Pears' Annual,' he turned up the maps of Europe and Asia Minor, and after a few hurried measurements unfolded to his stable companions, Perce and Looney, what was afterwards known as the "Aeroplane Scheme." These three had, with much expense and trouble, managed to collect enough planks for a real wooden partition to their "room," and it was behind this screen that this and many another devilish plot was hatched.

Briefly, Nobby's idea was for a flight of five or six Handley-Pages to be sent from Cyprus, swoop down on Changri and pick up the whole camp, both officers and men,—and Sami too. We should, of course, have to take over the barracks from our guards, but this should easily be effected by a *coup-de-main* and probably without

having to resort to bloodshed. At first the idea appeared a trifle fantastic, for after being cut off from the outside world for two whole years, it took time for us to assimilate the wonderful advance of aeronautical science which the scheme assumed: but given that Tweedledum's statement was correct, the scheme was feasible, and we soon took up the question seriously. Our representative of the R.F.C. pronounced the surrounding fields practicable landing-grounds: a committee confirmed the possibility of taking over the barracks by surprise; and the whole scheme, illustrated by a small sketch of the vicinity, was soon on its way home. We were fortunate in having by now a method of communicating secret information without much risk of detection: for the censorship of our letters, like most things in Turkey, was not very efficient. Unfortunately it used to take at least four months to receive a reply to a letter. For this reason we could not afford to wait until a definite date was communicated to us, so we ourselves named the first fifteen days of May as suitable for us, and agreed, from 6 to 8 A.M. on each of those days, to remain in a state of instant readiness to seize the barracks should an aeroplane appear. For the sake of secrecy, the details of the *coup-de-main* itself were left to be worked out by a small committee, and the report spread amongst the rest of the camp that the scheme had been dropped. The true state of affairs would not be divulged until a few days before the first of May.

There were now at Changri 47 officers and 28 orderlies—a total force of 75 unarmed men with which to take over the barracks. Our guard, all told, numbered 70 men. At any one time during daylight there were seven Turkish sentries on duty: one outside each corner of the barracks, one inside the square which had an open staircase at each corner, one at the arched entrance in the centre of the north face, and the seventh stood guard over the commandant's office. This was a room in the upper storey over the archway and facing on to the square.

On each side of the commandant's office, therefore, were the barrack-rooms inhabited by the British officers, and to go from one side to the other it was necessary to pass the sentry standing at his post in the landing in between. From here a flight of steps gave on to the road through the main archway; on the other side of this again, and facing the stairs, was the door of the ground-floor barrack-room used by our guard. This room was similar to those in the upper storey already described, and we found out by looking through a hole made for the purpose in the floor of the room above, and by casual visits when we wanted an escort for the bazaar, that the rifles of the occupants were kept in a row of racks on either side of the central passage-way.

Each morning of the first fifteen days of May we were

to be ready from 6 to 8 A.M. to take over the barracks. The committee's plan was this. By 6 A.M. every one was to be dressed, but those who had no specific job to do were to get back into bed again in case suspicion should be caused in the mind of any one who happened to come round. The aeroplanes, if they came, would arrive from the south. Two look-out parties of three therefore were to be at their posts by 6 A.M., one in the officers' mess in the S.E. and the other in the Padre's room next to the chapel in the S.W. corner of the barracks.

The staircases at these two corners of the square were to be watched by two sentries, one in each half of the north wing. When the look-outs in the south wing had either distinctly heard or seen an aeroplane, they were to come to their staircase and start walking down it to the square. The sentries in the north wing would give the alarm, and the officer, who had the honour of doing verger to the Padre, and who used to ring a handbell before services, would run down the north-western staircase and walk diagonally across the square towards the chapel, ringing the bell for exactly thirty seconds.

The stopping of the bell was to be the signal for simultaneous action. The sentry on the landing could be easily disposed of by three officers; most of the rest were to run down certain staircases, cross the archway, dash into the barrack-room and get hold of all the rifles; a small party at the same moment tackling the sentry on the main entrance.

On seeing the rush through the archway, the look-out parties from the south wing would overpower the sentry in the square. The arms belonging to the three sentries and one other rifle were to be immediately taken to the corners of the barracks and the outside sentries covered. The orderlies, under an officer, would meanwhile form up in the square as a reserve.

Surprise was to be our greatest ally, and we hoped that within a minute of the bell stopping the barracks would be in our hands.

Having herded our Turkish guard into a big cellar and locked them in there, we would then signal to the aeroplanes that the barracks were in our possession, by sheets laid out in the square; while small picquets, armed with Turkish rifles and ammunition, would see to it that the aeroplanes on landing would be unmolested from the village. We are still convinced that the plan would have succeeded.

Even those in the know, however, put little faith in the probability of the aeroplane scheme being carried out, realising that the machines necessary for such an enterprise were not likely to be available from the main battle-fronts. Preparations therefore continued for working out our own salvation, as though this plan for outside help had not entered our heads. With the first signs of spring, the tunnel

scheme began to take concrete form. As already mentioned in the description of the barracks, the ground to the west rose gently up to the Angora road. In this slope was a shallow cup-like depression at a distance of 40 yards from the building. If only a convenient point for starting a tunnel could be found in the nearest wall, the cup would form an ideal spot for breaking out to ground-level. A night reconnaissance was made, as the result of which there seemed a likelihood that, under the whole of the platform of the downstairs room on the western side of the barracks we should find a hollow space varying from one to three feet in depth; if the surmise were correct and a tunnel was run out from here, there would be no difficulty in getting rid of all the excavated earth into this hollow space. Unfortunately the lower room, though not in use, was kept locked.

It was discovered, however, that the walls of the barracks consisted of an outer and inner skin, each a foot thick, and built of large sun-dried bricks, the space between being filled up with a mixture of rubble, mortar, and earth, and a few larger stones. This was in the bottom storey. Above this the construction of the wall changed to two thicknesses of lath and plaster attached to either side of a timber framing, and the thickness of the wall diminished to only nine inches. The total width of the wall below was five feet; therefore the lockers in the upper room were immediately above the rubble core of the heavier wall. It would thus be possible to get down through the lockers and sink a shaft through the rubble to a trifle below the level of the ground, and from there to break through the inner skin and come into the empty space below the ground floor.

Work was commenced in the middle of February 1918. For the next few weeks an officer was usually to be seen lolling about at either end of the first-floor rooms, and, on the approach of an interpreter or other intruder, would stroll leisurely down the passage, whistling the latest rag-time melody. Within the room all would now be silent; but when the coast was again clear there could perhaps be seen in the barrack-room a pair of weird figures, strangely garbed and white with dust. Somewhere in the line of lockers was the entrance to the shaft-head. The locker doors being only a foot square, were too small to admit a man, and so the top planks at the place where we wished to work had been prised up and fitted with hinges to form a larger entrance. To give additional room inside, the partition between two consecutive lockers was also removed. The floor of one locker and the joints supporting the platform at this point were then cut away, and we were free to commence the shaft. For this job six officers were chosen, of whom three belonged to our escape party. The six were divided into three reliefs, and each

worked for two hours at a time. The hole was of necessity only just large enough for one man to work there, so of the pair one did the digging, and his partner, when the shaft had progressed a little, sat inside the locker at the top of the hole. While actually at work the time went quickly enough; but sitting in the locker was very wearisome, as one's only duties were to pass on the alarm when the rag-time was whistled, and from time to time to draw up by a rope the small sacks filled by the digger. When all the available sacks were full work was stopped, and the two would emerge from the locker. The sacks of rubbish were then carried a few yards along the room and emptied into a space underneath some planks which we had loosened in the platform. At the end of their relief, the two would go off to change their clothes, leaving the work to be continued by the next pair. During the many hours he spent in the locker, one of the six learnt Omar Khayyám by heart. Reading a book would have been almost impossible owing to the lack of light, even if it had been permissible, in view of the risk of the reader becoming so interested as to miss the signal of the alarm. Omar, however, was a different thing. A verse could be read line by line at the streak of light entering by a chink in one of the ill-fitting locker doors, and then committed to memory—not a very engrossing task, but it helped to pass the time.

The working kit was a light one: a shirt and "shorts," sand-shoes and a Balaclava cap. Round his mouth the digger usually tied a handkerchief, so as not to swallow his peck of dust at one time, while the cap prevented his hair and ears getting quite full of rubbish.

Let us work for one relief. You are dressed for the occasion. The tools, consisting of two chisels, are at the bottom of the hole, which is, say, twelve feet deep. A couple of candles and a box of matches is all you need take with you. It is your turn to dig. You get into the locker and climb down the rope-ladder as quickly as possible, but you must take care not to touch the outer skin of the wall as you go, or you may find yourself staring at an astonished sentry outside: there are already a few holes in the wall, through which daylight can be seen.

The candle lighted, you have a look round: but this is absurd! No one has done any work since you were down there yesterday morning. That beastly stone in the corner looks as tightly embedded in the mortar as it was then. You bend down to pick up a chisel, and you bump your head against a projecting brick. You try to sit down, but there is not enough room to sit and work at the same time. You try kneeling, but it can't be done. After twisting your limbs in a hitherto undreamt-of fashion, you begin to chip away at the mortar round your old friend. Nothing seems to happen; then suddenly your

candle falls down and goes out, and your chamber of little ease is left in Stygian darkness.

You think you hear your partner say "stop," and you look up just in time to get your eyes full of grit, for he has merely shifted his legs, which are dangling above you. After untying yourself you relight the candle, and again get down to the stone. You pick and scrape and prise, and then, as the chisel slips, you bark your knuckles, and so you go on. All sense of time is lost, and your one thought is to get that stone out. Now it moves, and you work with redoubled energy, with the result that you break into a profuse perspiration. How you hate that stone! Finally, up it comes when you don't expect it, and the bruise at the back of your head is nothing compared to the joy of the Victor, which is equally yours.

The rock is too big, however, to go into a sack, so you shut your eyes and whisper to your partner above you. He then lets down an old canvas bath kept in the looker for this purpose. The periphery of the bath is attached to a rope by several cords, the resulting appearance as it is lowered towards you being that of an inverted parachute. The stone is difficult to lift and your feet are very much in the way, but in the end the load is ready. There is not enough room in the shaft for the stone and the bath to be pulled up past your body, so you climb the ladder and help your partner to haul. This done, work is resumed. A small sack is filled with bits of mortar picked away from round the stone, and this too is pulled up the shaft, but the sack being small you need not leave the hole.

Now your partner tells you that it is time for the next shift. You leave the chisels in an obvious place, blow out the candle, and climb to the looker. Here your partner is tapping gently against the door. If your sentry says "All safe!" you push open the lid and emerge. The big stone is hastily carried to an empty looker, and the rubbish from the sack is poured under some planks loosened in the floor a few yards down the room. The planks are replaced, the bath and sack returned to the looker, the lid closed, and the place once more assumes its normal aspect.

You then nip along to the nearest inhabited room, where you find your relief waiting for you. One of these two is almost certain to greet you with the words, "I suppose you got that stone in the corner out straight away. I practically finished it off last night. It only wanted a heave or two." It is useless to point out that had it not been for the masterly manner in which you had worked, the stone would still be firmly embedded there. You merely bide your time, certain that within a few days you will be in a position to make a similar remark to him.

Work was now being carried on continuously throughout the day. Besides the diggers, there were twenty-four officers, who took their turn as look-

outs. It was not possible to keep the work going at night, for from time to time the sentries outside would patrol this wing of the barracks. In the day-time, when they approached the point where we were at work, our look-outs could stop the diggers, but this would have been impossible after dark. Moreover, light from a candle would then have been visible from outside through the holes in the wall.

At this stage our plans received a rude shock, for we were suddenly informed that we were to be moved to the prisoner-of-war camp at Yozgad, 80 miles south-east of us. We were to be ready, said Sami Bey, to start within a week. After our experience of the departure from Kastamoni, we came to the conclusion it might equally well be a month before the necessary transport was collected. We determined therefore to push on with the tunnel at high pressure, and if necessary to bring it out to ground-level short of the spot originally intended, and then one dark night to make a bolt for it. So the work went on.

For the first three feet of the shaft we had found merely loose rubble and stones easily excavated, for the next thirteen we had to dig out stones embedded in very hard mortar. Here we progressed only a few inches a day. Below this there was solid concrete. Every few feet we came to wooden ties holding the inner and outer skins together, but fortunately these were to one side of the hole and we did not have to cut through them.

At the time the move was announced we were at a depth of 16 feet, just entering the concrete. Here we were below the level of the lower storey, so we broke through the inner skin into the space beneath the flooring. We now found, to our disgust, that the ground was on an average barely a foot below the joists, and the surface, being composed of dust which had been falling for 80 years between the boards of a Turkish barrack-room floor, was very unpleasant.

Our disappointment, however, was counteracted by a stroke of good luck. At each end of the barrack-room above there was an alcove, and we found beneath the nearer of the two alcoves an empty space 8 feet by 6 by 5. In this we could dispose of a good deal of the spoil from the tunnel. To get rid of the rest we should have to make a main burrow below the floor, filling up the remaining space on either side between the ground and the floor, and eventually packing the burrow itself with earth excavated from the mine. Should this again not suffice, the surplus earth would have to be pulled up by way of the shaft and distributed under the boards of the upper-room platform. All that now remained for us to do before actually starting on the tunnel itself was to sink a secondary shaft about 6 feet deep, so as to get below the level of the concrete foundations. After this we could strike horizontally towards the Angora road.

The method of moving about in the confined space was that employed by the caterpillar that loops its back, draws its hind legs under it, and then advances with its forehand, and we found it a slow means of locomotion. The burrow to the hollow under the alcove was completed, and another in the opposite direction to the further alcove was well on its way when we started to work on the second shaft. Three feet down we came to water. It was a great blow to us, and although with unlimited time at our disposal the difficulty might have been overcome, under present circumstances we had to consider ourselves defeated in that direction—especially as we heard, a few days later, that transport was already on its way from Angora.

The early move would also of course upset the aeroplane scheme, and we sincerely hoped that the authorities at home would hear that we had left Changri in time to prevent aeroplanes being sent; for although the scheme forwarded to them had provided somewhat for this contingency by arranging that the aeroplanes were not to land till they got the special signal from us, it was not pleasant to think that we might be the cause of risk to valuable pilots and machines, and all to no purpose. Apart from the move, however, it eventually turned out that the scheme could not be entertained at home, as in April and May 1918 every available machine was being urgently required for making things unpleasant for the Germans behind the main battle-front.

CHAPTER III.

Thus, disappointed of two of our schemes, we looked around for other ways and means of escape. Nobby had another of his brain-waves. In search of dry firewood we had made several tours inside the roof of the barracks: for the ceilings and tiled slopes were carried, not by modern trusses, but by the primitive and wasteful means of trestles resting on enormous horizontal baulks, running across from wall to wall at close intervals. On these it was possible, having entered the roof space by a trap-door in the ceiling, to walk completely round the barracks, and eke out the miserably green firewood we collected ourselves by chips and odd ends of comparatively dry wood, left up there presumably several decades before, while the barracks were in building. Why not, said Nobby, disappear up there one night, and leave the Turks to infer that we had escaped, encouraging them in the belief by leaving the bars of some window out and forced apart? We could then wait until the rest had left for Yozgad, and slip out from the deserted barracks at our pleasure.

There were, however, two obvious objections to this scheme. It was hardly feasible as a

means of escape for more than one or at the most two parties. The Turk might be deceived into thinking half a dozen fellows had slipped past his sentries, but hardly twenty or more. Secondly, it was quite conceivable that the escape of even a small party would lead to the move to Yozgad being cancelled altogether. It is true it would be possible for the stowaways to be fed in the roof by their companions below, but the prospect of spending three years, or the duration of the war, in that dark and musty garret, took away from the otherwise considerable attractions of the scheme.

In the end a very much modified form of the roof scheme was permitted by a committee of senior officers, and our party of six, having been adjudged by this committee to have the best chances of success on account of our pre-arranged plan when we reached the coast, was given the privilege of making the attempt. As will be seen, however, it was less an actual attempt than a waiting upon favourable circumstances which would arise should our captors make a certain mistake. In any country except Turkey the whole conception would have been absurd.

By good luck the party's preparations for escape were already far advanced, although, apart from the move, we had not proposed starting until June, on account of the rains, which continue off and on till then, and of the immature state of the crops at an earlier date. At the cost of a good deal of time, temper, needles and thread, we had each succeeded in making ourselves a pack, for the canvas for which we sacrificed our valises Up till almost the last night, however, we were busy repeatedly cutting straps and sewing them on again in a different place, in a wild endeavour to persuade our equipment to ride with a reasonable degree of comfort.

Food was, of course, an item of vital importance in any plan of escape, and we decided to follow the example of Keeling's party, and pin our faith mainly to a ration of biscuits. We had also for some months past been collecting from our parcels all tinned meat, condensed milk, and chocolate.

We brought our biscuit-making to a fine art. One of the ground-floor rooms had been set apart as the officers', carpenters', and bootmakers' shops—for we had long taken to making our own furniture and repairing our own boots. Here, then, was started the "Bimbashi" Biscuit Department of Escapers Limited. At one bench would be Grunt and Johnny busily engaged in the uncongenial task of taking the stalks off sultanas, and the pleasanter one of eating a few. At another stood Perce with his bared forearms buried in a mixture of flour, sugar, and sultanas, to which from time to time Nobby would add the requisite quantities of water and eggs. The Old Man presided at the scales, and, weighing out the dough into lumps sufficient for twenty biscuits, passed them on to Looney.

Armed with rolling-pin, carving-knife and straight-edge, the latter would flatten out each lump until it filled up the inside of a square frame which projected slightly above the bench to which it was fixed. When a level slab had been obtained, the ruler would be placed against marks on the frame, and the slab cut five times in one direction and four in the other. It then only remained to transfer the twenty little slabs to boards, prick them with any fancy pattern with a nail, and send them to be baked by one of our orderlies. The biscuit was about the size of a quarter-plate, and half an inch thick, weighing five to the pound, and as hard as a rock. Their best testimonials were that, without being kept in tins, they remained perfectly good for six months.

The biscuit-making concern was run regardless of expense. A pound of flour was costing at that time two shillings, sugar ten shillings, sultanas five, and eggs threepence a piece. (These, by the way, were only about half of what we soon after found ourselves paying at Yozgad. The final cost was something like half-a-crown a biscuit.)

For their escapes, Keeling and his companions had decided, if questioned, to say that they were a German survey party, and for this purpose had forged a letter purporting to come from the Commandant of the Angora Division, and ordering all whom it might concern to help them in every way. They had written to say this letter had been of the greatest assistance to them. As we were going in a different direction, we thought that the same story would serve again. Grunt, being the best Turkish scholar of the party, accordingly drafted a suitable legend in a crisp style, such as might be expected to emanate from Enver Pasha's pen; while Johnny, aided by infinite patience and a bit of blue carbon paper, set to work and produced a faithful imitation of an office stamp found on a Turkish receipt. We hoped that the elaborated lettering of such a crest would be as little intelligible to the average Ottoman as it was to ourselves, but as a matter of interest we decided to show the original to our Greek interpreter and casually ask its meaning. And it was as well we did so, for it was the stamp of the prisoners-of-war camp, Yozgad.

After the unfortunate setback, our pair put their heads together and finally evolved a design of their own, bearing the inscription, "Office of the Ministry of War, Stamboul."

All this time, of course, we were subjecting ourselves to a course of rigorous training—football, running in the early mornings, Müller's exercises, and cold baths. We spent half the day walking round and round the exercise ground, wearing waistcoats weighing twenty pounds, which, if disclosed from under the coat, would have reminded any one but a Turkish observer of one of those advertisements of a

firm of tyre-makers, for the waistcoat was lined with a series of cloth tubes filled with sand.

Nobby, who detested sewing more than any of us, went to the trouble of making a practice rucksack carrying sixty pounds of earth. The whole of our last few weeks at Changri, one may say, were spent by the party in preparing one way or another for the escape.

On the evening of the 10th April 1918 the cart transport for our journey drove into the barrack square and there parked for the night. Orders came from the Commandant that we were to start next day, so we decided that before we went to bed our preparations should be completed.

A light ladder was made by which to climb up into the roof, drinking water was taken up in buckets and hidden there, a window-frame in the east wing was prepared so that the iron bars could be withdrawn, and we made certain by going through a list that our packs contained all that we had decided to take. The latter were then unpacked, and they and their contents placed in two boxes, each of which had a false bottom. Here were concealed our most incriminating, and at the same time our most precious, aids to escape—our maps, helio-mirrors, fezes, and compasses. The boxes were then locked, strongly bound with rope, and labelled very appropriately "Trek Stores."

For the work on hand that night the occasion was an excellent one. Every one was busy packing, having left this unpleasant duty till the carts actually arrived. There was a lot of noise being made—to wit, a blend of singing and sawing—and when at 1 A.M. we could at last go to bed there was still much activity around us.

Next morning we showed ourselves as much as possible, and took care to find an opportunity of talking to the two camp interpreters. It was conceivable that they might take our names in the barracks, as was usual each morning; and the Commandant, being satisfied that every one was present, might omit to call roll when the move actually took place, or alternately, in the excitement of the moment, there might be no roll-call whatsoever.

On one or other of these possibilities depended the success of the modified scheme, which stipulated that until the carts were definitely on the move we were not to hide ourselves in the roof. Should the party go off without a roll-call, we were allowed to leave ourselves behind. If, on the other hand, roll was called, we had to turn up for it. This explains the necessity for the two boxes of "Trek Stores"; for, if we were left behind, these could be quickly taken up into the roof, and if roll should be called, we could hastily, and without losing our valuable escape outfit, join the carts, merely carrying two boxes of food.

After loading up our own carts with the rest of our kit in case the scheme miscarried,

we took these boxes into the mess-room at the S.E. corner of the barracks, and as the time of departure drew near, we went there ourselves and sat round a few bits of bread and an empty jam-pot. Our excellent friend H—— promised to come and warn us should there be a call over.

From the windows facing south could be seen the Angora road, and this we watched eagerly. The barracks were quite quiet. After many minutes a loaded cart appeared on the road followed by another. Our hopes began to rise; the one-in-a-thousand chance might yet come off. There were more carts moving on the road now, but to our disappointment they suddenly stopped, and a few seconds afterwards H—— dashed in. They were calling the roll. We carried the boxes outside, there to be met by several officers who had come back, so they said, to collect some firewood for the journey, but really to make our late appearance as unsuspicious as possible. No wonder we were as happy at Changri as it was possible to be, having men like these for our companions.

You may think that it was not worth our while to have taken so much trouble for so small a chance, yet you probably take a ticket in the Derby sweep. It was, we admit, a small chance, but the prize was a great one, so we were unwilling to let it slip by.

Although the direct distance from Changri to Yozgad, as the crow flies, is barely eighty miles, the only road open to our wheeled transport was that which runs by way of Angora: our march, therefore, was about 100 miles longer. For the first sixty—that is to say, to Angora—the country was familiar to us, as we had marched along this route in the opposite direction on the way to our first camp, Kastamoni, nearly two years before. It was impossible, unfortunately, to induce our Commandant to say beforehand each day where would be the halts for the midday meal and the next night, for he did not know himself, and this was a matter to be fought out with his brother officer in charge of the transport. In other respects this march, like that from Kastamoni, was a pleasing innovation after the long monotony of our confinement. After the first few hours, the escort wearied of their primary keenness and allowed us to march pretty well at our own pace, except for occasional halts to allow the carts to come up. In fact, precautions against escaping *en route* were unexpectedly lax. On the very first day, for instance, it was not until after dark that we halted for the night, and a dozen officers might easily have slipped away from a party which went to the river, a few hundred yards distant, to fetch water: roll-call was not held until we marched off next morning. We had agreed amongst ourselves, however, that we would now wait until we reached Yozgad, and could contrive some plan by which all parties

might once more have an equal chance of escaping. It was for this reason that we let slip the above and later opportunities to make off while on trek.

Half-way to Angora we came to the village of Kalijik, where we were offered billets in the local jail, already well peopled with Turkish criminals. On our refusing this offer, we were housed for the night in an empty building on the edge of the village.

We reached Angora four days after leaving Yozgad, and were accommodated in up-to-date buildings, designed by Germans as a hospital, but since used as Turkish barracks. Luckily the particular house in which we were billeted had not as yet been used by Turks. During our two days here we were allowed very fair liberty in visiting the bazaars, the shops of which, after our six months at Changri, appeared almost magnificent in the profusion of their wares. In one of these it was that Nobby espied a pair of real Goetz field-glasses. Telling his companion to lure away the "posta" who escorted them, he entered the shop and succeeded in purchasing the glasses, and a schoolboy's satchel in which to conceal them, for about £18—a tall price; and yet if the prices of other things had been in no higher proportion to their real value, living in Turkey would have been comparatively cheap. In the end these glasses were of inestimable value to our party.

While we were in Angora some of us went to see Sherif Bey, whose propensity for epigram was touched upon in the opening words of our story. As second-in-command he had accompanied us in our move from Kastamoni to Changri. There he had been perpetually at loggerheads with our new, as indeed he had been with our two former commandants. Having eventually relinquished his ambition of superseding Sami Bey, he had recently accepted the less remunerative post of commandant of the British rank-and-file prisoners in the Angora district. Some of the men whom we succeeded in meeting had certain complaints to make against their previous commandant. A deputation of officers therefore waited upon his successor, who received them with a show of great friendliness, and assured them that under his benevolent sway such things as the looting of parcels would be impossible. Whether he fulfilled his promises we are not yet in a position to say: the fact remains that he treated very badly the five officers who stayed behind a few extra days for dental and medical treatment, asserting that they had only stopped in Angora with a view to escape.

Moreover, there were at this very time under Sherif Bey's orders two submarine officers who had been sent from the camp at Afion-Kara-Hissar, and were to join our convoy when it went on to Yozgad. Since their arrival in Angora a week before they had been confined to the only hotel, and had not once been allowed to visit the bazaar. One of the two

was Lieut.-Commander A. D. Cochrane, who was destined to play the leading rôle in the eventual escape of our particular party. The other was Lieut.-Commander S——. These two had, with one other naval officer, attempted to escape from the camp at Kara-Hissar, but had been recaptured when within sight of the sea: they had since spent ten months in a common Turkish jail.

Lieut.-Commander S—— had also been the victim of reprisals under somewhat amusing circumstances. Whilst he was at Kara-Hissar, an order arrived one day ordering that two officers of high birth and closely connected with the British aristocracy should be selected and sent to Constantinople. Thereupon a list was prepared of officers related to Labour candidates, Dukes, Members of Parliament, &c. Thinking that this promised at least a jaunt to Constantinople, S—— had claimed descent from the bluest blood of England. After consideration of the rival claims, he and one other were selected. Their self-congratulations, however, were a little premature, as the Commandant now informed them that the Turkish Government, having heard that their officer prisoners in India were being badly treated, proposed taking reprisals until their powerful relations should think fit to remedy matters on both sides. In vain the unfortunate dupes protested that the report was obviously false, and asked that further inquiries should be made before reprisals were carried into effect: the reply was that the order was Enver Pasha's, and could not be questioned, but that if they agreed to go quietly to Constantinople, they would at once be led into the presence of the Generalissimo, where they could put forward their complaint in person. To this they had perforce to agree, but on arrival in the capital were at once flung into prison, kept in solitary confinement, and fed on bread and water. In this state they remained for some three weeks, after which the Turkish authorities discovered, as was only natural, that there had not been an atom of truth in the report upon which they had acted. By way of redress, therefore, they allowed the innocent sufferers six days' absolute freedom in Constantinople, after which they were taken to their old camp.

From Angora onwards we were escorted by parties of the local gendarmerie; of the Changri guard who had so far accompanied us, only a few came on with us to Yozgad, and they, ill-trained, ill-fed, and ill-clad, were rather passengers who called for our pity than guards capable of preventing us from decamping.

The gendarmes were, for the most part, remarkably well mounted, and in charge of them was a benevolent old gentleman of the rank of *bash-chaouse*, or sergeant-major, who was for ever holding forth upon his friendship towards the English, and his utter inability to understand why we were not fighting side by side in this war. The

sergeant-major talked much to us, punctuating his remarks with "Jánim," "my dear." He was jovial, he was pleasing to look at, he was interesting. He had been through several Turkish wars, and he discussed the Great War with more intelligence than many of the Turkish officers we had met.

One day as two of us were marching beside the horse he was riding, the dear old man pointed out a deep ravine some few hundred yards to our right. His face lighted up with pride of achievement and pleasant recollection. "Do you see that ravine?" he said. "Well, there I helped to massacre 5000 Armenians. Allah be praised!"

The 120 mile march from Angora to Yozgad occupied eight days. As usual, we bivouacked each night in the open, on one occasion coming in for a tremendous thunderstorm. Our best day's march was one of 30 miles, and brought us down to the Kizil Irmak, better known to Greek scholars as the ancient river Halys. We camped on the western bank opposite the village of Kopru-Keui (bridge-village), so called from the picturesque old stone bridge which here spans the largest river in Asia Minor. We were all glad of a bathe, although this was only safe close to the bank, where the water was hardly deep enough to swim in. The rest of the river was a swirling torrent of brown and muddy water, dashing between enormous rocks, which, as it were, protected the bridge from their fury, and so under only two of the nine arches and through the narrow gorge between high precipitous cliffs beyond. The bridge itself, with narrow and steeply-cambered roadway and pointed arches, each of different height and span, seemed almost a part with the rocky cleft it spanned.

The rest of our move to Yozgad was uneventful, except for the upsetting of two carts, owing to reckless driving on the part of the Turkish jehus.

On the 24th April 1918 we set out from a small village twelve miles from our destination. The way climbed gradually till we topped a high ridge. Over this we marched, swinging down the farther slope at a quicker step. The winding road curled round spurs and valleys, and from one such spur we obtained our first sight of the town of Yozgad.

Unprepossessing it looked lying in a valley surrounded by barren hills: a few poplars here and there, the usual timber-built houses, a few mosques.

Four months later we looked at it for the last time. We could only see a few twinkling lights to the east in a curtain of starlit darkness, but we were well content as we turned away, for we had shaken the dust of prison from our feet.

(To be continued.)

THE WAR OFFICE IN WAR TIME.—II.

BY MAJOR-GENERAL SIR C. E. CALLWELL, K.C.B.

"You cannot," Mr Lloyd George declared when expounding his theory of Cabinet constitution for times of emergency, on the occasion of his first speech in the House after assuming the Premiership, "run a war with a Sanhedrin." I had, some twelve months earlier, undergone an illuminating experience of the unsuitability for controlling military policy of a body so composed. The whole transaction was indeed so singular that a careful note was made of dates and details at the time. Incidents such as this require to be made known, because they may serve as a warning. So here is the story.

The question whether the Dardanelles venture was, or was not, to be proceeded with, was perpetually under discussion in Government circles and at the War Office during the autumn of 1915; and from the moment when it became apparent that the large reinforcements demanded by Sir I. Hamilton could not be spared, the view of soldiers in Whitehall that evacuation was the only possible course hardened from day to day. Our rulers, however, halted between two opinions. On his taking over the command late in October, General Monro, after reviewing the situation on the spot, pronounced himself uncompromisingly in favour of withdrawal; Lord Kitchener thereupon left for the Ægean, and nothing happened for about three weeks. But on the 23rd of November my chief, Sir A. Murray, summoned me, after a meeting of the War Council, to say that that body wished me to repair straightway to Paris and to make General Gallieni, the War Minister, acquainted with a decision which they had just arrived at—viz., that the Gallipoli Peninsula was to be abandoned without further ado. The full Cabinet would meet on the morrow (the 24th) to endorse the decision. That afternoon Mr Asquith, who was acting as Secretary of State for War in the absence of Lord Kitchener, sent for me and repeated these instructions.

I left by the morning boat-train next day, having wired to our military attaché to arrange, if possible, an interview with General Gallieni that evening; and he met me at the Gare du Nord, bearer of an invitation to dinner from the War Minister, and of a telegram from General Murray, intimating that the Cabinet, having met as arranged, had been unable to come to a decision, but were going to have another try on the morrow. Here was a con-

tingency that was not covered by instructions, and for which one was not prepared, but I decided to tell General Gallieni exactly how matters stood. (Adroitly drawn out for my benefit by his personal staff during dinner, the great soldier told us that stirring tale of how, as Governor of Paris, he despatched its garrison in buses and taxis and any vehicles that he could lay hands upon, to buttress the army which, under Maunoury's stalwart leadership, was to fall upon Von Kluck's flank, and was to usher in the victory of the Marne.)

A fresh wire came to hand from the War Office on the following afternoon, announcing that the Cabinet had again been unable to clinch the business, but contemplated a further séance two days later, the 27th. On the afternoon of the 27th, however, a message arrived from General Murray, to say that our rulers had yet again failed to make up their minds, and that the best thing I could do under the circumstances was to return to the War Office. General Gallieni, when the position of affairs was explained to him, was most sympathetic, quoted somebody's dictum that "la politique n'a pas d'entrailles," and hinted that he did not always find it quite plain sailing with his own gang. Still, there it was. The Twenty-Three had thrown the War Council over (it was then composed of Messrs Asquith, Bonar Law, Lloyd George, and Balfour, and Lord Grey, assisted by the First Sea Lord and the C.I.G.S.), and they were leaving our army marooned on the Gallipoli Peninsula, with the winter approaching apace, in a position growing more and more precarious owing to Serbia's collapse and Bulgaria's accession to the enemy ranks having freed the great artery of communications connecting Germany with the Golden Horn. One wonders whether that edifying and eloquent memorandum to which reference was made in a former article can have had anything to do with the Cabinet's infuriating infirmity of purpose.

Enough to make Peel or Gladstone or the late Lord Salisbury turn in their graves, the War Cabinet plan, with its Minutes of Proceedings and its discussions in the presence of goodness knows who, does seem preferable to the time-honoured procedure at junctures when the situation of the State requires the Powers that Be to get a move on. Politicians, when they came to be received up into the supreme council, used to take themselves and their deliberations very seriously indeed before Mr Lloyd George's iconoclastic innovations. There was an atmosphere of mystery about Cabinet meetings at the Prime Minister's house which was exceedingly impressive, and which made it all the more extraordinary in the early days of the war, that whenever the gathering by any accident made up its

mind about anything that was in the least interesting, everybody outside knew all about it within twenty-four hours. Officers of high standing and in the confidence of the General Staff would come to the War Office to inquire about prospective operations in which they were to be concerned, and one wondered why they did not go to the Carlton or the Ritz, where they would have heard all about it under much more attractive conditions. I was summoned to stand by at 10 Downing Street one day, when the Cabinet was sitting soon after the Coalition Government was formed, and when Lord Kitchener happened to be away in France, on the chance of being wanted. After an interminable wait—during the luncheon hour, too—Mr Henderson, who was a very recent acquisition, emerged stealthily from the council-chamber after the manner of the conspirator in an Adelphi drama (although he did not quite look the part), and intimated that my services were not required. In obedience to an unwritten law, the last-joined member was always expected to do odd jobs of this sort, just as at some schools the bottom boy of the form is called upon by the form-master to perform certain menial offices *pro bono republico*.

"Lord K. tells us nothing, and Winston lies to us," one Minister of the Crown is reported to have murmured sadly. And why not? With what object should people of that sort be told anything, and if they are told anything why should it be the truth? War is too serious a business to justify the proclamation of prospective naval and military operations from the house-tops; reasonable precautions must be taken. One thing one did learn during those early months of the war, and that was, that the fewer the individuals are—no matter who they may be—who are made acquainted with secrets, the better. But this is not of such vital importance when the secret concerns some matter of limited interest to the ordinary person, as it is when the secret happens to relate to what is calculated to attract public attention.

Now, it was most reprehensible on the part of that expansive youth, Geoffrey, to have acquainted Gladys—strictly between themselves of course—that his company had been "dished out with a brand-new, slap-up, experimental automatic rifle, that'll make Mr Boche sit up when we get across." Still, it did no harm, because Gladys doesn't care twopence about rifles of any kind, and had forgotten all about it before she had swallowed the chocolate that was in her mouth. But when Geoffrey informed Gladys a fortnight later—again strictly between themselves—that the regiment was booked for a stunt at Cuxhaven, it did a great deal of harm. Because, although Gladys did not know where Cuxhaven was, she

looked it up in the atlas when she got home, and she thereupon realised, with a wriggle of gratification, that she was "in the know," and under the circumstances she could hardly have been expected not to tell Agatha—under pledge, needless to say, of inviolable secrecy. Nor would you have been well advised to have bet that Agatha would not—in confidence—mention the matter to Genevieve, because you would have lost your money if you had. Then, it was only to be expected that Genevieve should let the cat out of the bag that afternoon at the meeting of Lady Blabit's Committee for the Development of Discretion in Damsels, observing that in *such* company a secret was bound to be absolutely safe. However, that was how the whole story came to be known, and Geoffrey might just as well have done the thing handsomely, and have placarded what was contemplated in Trafalgar Square alongside Mr Bonar Law's frenzied incitements to buy war bonds.

But, seriously, there is rather too much of the sieve about the soldier-officer when information comes to his knowledge which it is his duty to keep to himself. He has much to learn in this respect from his sailor brother. You won't get much to windward of the naval cadet or the midshipman, if you try to extract out of him details concerning the vessel which has him on her books in time of war—what she is, where she is, or how she occupies her time. These youngsters cannot have absorbed reticence automatically as one of the traditions of that great silent service to which, more than to any other factor, we and our Allies owe our common triumph. It must have been dinned into them at Osborne and Dartmouth, and it must be impressed upon them day after day by their superiors afloat. The subject used not to be mentioned at the Woolwich Academy in the 'seventies, nor was secretiveness inculcated amongst battery subalterns a few years subsequently. One does not somehow remember having preached the virtues of discretion in this connection to one's juniors oneself, at a later date. The General Staff must see to this.

Most officers who served at the War Office during the prolonged hostilities enjoyed occasional breaks in their monotonous existence in the form of visits to Paris or the Western Front on some duty or other, or to Italy or the United States, or even to Egypt and far-off Mesopotamia, and it was my good fortune to be sent on a couple of missions to Russia in 1916. What especially struck one out there at that time were the almost illimitable possibilities of that empire in view of the prospective campaign of 1917, and the danger of everything being wrecked by an internal upheaval. The British Government have been derided for their handling of the Balkan problem in 1915; but any blunders of which they may

have been guilty in dealing with what was an extraordinarily complex situation in that cockpit of clashing nationalities, pale into insignificance when compared to their lamentable bungling of Russian affairs during the months before the cataclysm of March 1917. They were admirably served on the Neva, at the "Stavka," and in the field—an ambassador trusted on all hands in the country, the head of our military mission a *persona gratissima* with the Emperor, our military attachés and our officers who were accredited to armies, masters, all of them, of the language, and with their fingers ever on the pulse of military sentiment on the fighting fronts. The revolution may have been inevitable, but it might have been delayed until the war came to an end, and would perhaps never have taken so hideous a form as it has had our Government turned its opportunities to account.

Russians of pre-revolutionary days were masters of the art of entertaining guests of their country; but an experience that left a more vivid impression on one's mind than did their princely hospitality, was that of a gathering of fur-clad figures on a hill-top not far from Erzerum. There, on the very site of his triumph, a colonel explained to us in detail how with a mere handful of troops he had, in the mid-winter of 1914-15, routed three Ottoman army corps, and had thereby transformed a situation which was full of menace to Transcaucasia into one which became rich in promise. News of this dramatic feat of arms reached the War Office at the time, but without particulars. That the victor of this field, a field won by a masterpiece of soldiership, should remain a simple colonel, suggested a singular indifference on the part of authorities at the heart of the empire to what wardens of the marches accomplished in peace and war. That pow-wow in an icy blast amid the snow recalled the Grand Duke Nicholas's appeal to Lord Kitchener, that we should make some effort to take pressure off his inadequate and hard-pressed forces in Armenia, an appeal which landed us in the Dardanelles Campaign; and it further recalled the fact that the colonel's feat near Sarikamish had put an end to all need for British intervention almost before the Grand Duke made his appeal. The Russian victory, the details of which were explained to us that day by its creator, was gained on a date preceding by some weeks the Allies' naval attempt to conquer the Dardanelles single-handed.

An official visit to Dublin in connection with Convention projects for establishing a local military force provided a break in War Office routine at a considerably later stage. On arriving in that decaying city one could not help being struck by the multitudes of men of fighting age who were to be seen engaged in civilian

pursuits—civilian pursuits in the Irish metropolis largely take the form of loafing at street corners—and who maybe were subscribers to the eminently practical doctrine that "it's better to be Paddy the Coward than to be Paddy the Corpse." That unedifying spectacle would not have been seen had the Cabinet in London acted with judgment and with courage when they found themselves at the parting of the ways. But the truth is that English and Irish have never understood each other, and they never will. They do not even understand each other's language. I remember a great-aunt of mine—she hailed from Galway, and had spent her days in the Emerald Isle—engaging the wife of a soldier from barracks to attend and grapple with some dressmaking operations at her house in Dublin. This sartorial artist was a typical Cockney, whose staccato enunciation of clipped sentences puzzled my aunt exceedingly. One day the sempstress failed to fulfil her appointment, but was brimming over with apologies when she turned up in the evening. "M' cistern bust and come down through m' parlour ceiling," she barked. "Good gracious," ejaculated the horrified old lady, too taken aback to proffer condolences or to be able to think of anything more appropriate to say on the spur of the moment, "I didn't even know you'd got a sister!"

The feeling of relaxation which War Office officials experienced when they from time to time proceeded on duty to the Western Front no doubt prompted the project of despatching parties of our legislators across the Channel week by week, to improve their minds by visiting bivouacs, billets, and trenches. Elaborate arrangements were made for carrying this scheme out. Five senators were to form a party, and, so as to ensure that only reputable persons enjoyed the privilege, Mr Speaker was expected to detail the members. One legislator in reply to the invitation was good enough to intimate that he would comply with the "request" of the military authorities that he should go: the creature evidently believed that he was conferring a favour. Another regretted his inability to fall in with the proposal owing to indisposition—and he appended a medical certificate! That anybody in the War Office could be such a fool as to believe his word had seemingly never occurred to the man. The plan, however, never caught on, although all sorts and conditions of men were for ever endeavouring to proceed to the scene of operations on some pretext or other. When such busybodies bore the hall-mark of officialdom, and had to be treated accordingly at the front, they were naturally particularly obnoxious to soldiers who had something else to do than to be bothered with looking after unwanted visitors. Towards the end, however, those in high places manifested a marked prefer-

ence for Paris and Versailles. They used to proceed to "la ville lumière" *en masse*, like a magnified theatrical troupe on tour in the provinces—except that expenses were paid by the public. It was a little difficult to get things done at this end on such occasions, but one muddled along somehow.

One is prejudiced perhaps, and may not on that account do full justice to the achievements of some of those civilian branches which were evolved within the War Office and which elbowed out military branches altogether or else absorbed them; but they enjoyed great advantages, and on that account much could fairly be expected of them. Your civilian, introduced into the place with full powers and a blank cheque, stood on a very different footing from the soldier ever hampered by a control that was not always beneficently administered. (Financial experts on the War Office staff are apt to deliver their onsets upon the Treasury to the battle-cry of *Kamerad*.) At the same time, if the civilian elected to maintain on its military lines the branch that he had taken over, he sometimes turned out to be an asset. When the new broom adopted the plan of picking out the best men on the existing staff, of giving those preferred a couple of steps in rank, of providing them with large numbers of assistants, and of housing the result in some spacious edifice or group of edifices especially devised for the purpose, he sometimes contrived to develop what had been an efficient organisation before into a still more efficient one. In that case the spirit of the branch remained, it carried on as a military institution, but with a free hand and with extended liberty of action—and the public service benefited although the cost was considerably greater; but that was not always the procedure decided upon.

Still, whatever procedure was decided upon, every care was taken to advertise. Advertisement is an art that the Man of Business thoroughly understands, and as to which he has little to learn even from the politician with a Press syndicate at his back. Soldiers are deplorably apathetic in this respect. It will hardly be believed that during the war the military department charged with works and construction would leave the immediate supervision of the creation of some set of buildings in the hands of a single foreman of works, acting under an officer of Royal Engineers, who only paid a visit daily, as he would have several other duties of the same nature to perform. But if that set of buildings under construction came to be transferred to a civilian department or branch —the Ministry of Munitions, let us say—a large staff of supervisors of all kinds was at once introduced. Offices for them to carry on their supervisory duties in were erected. The thing was done in style; employment was given to a

number of worthy people at the public expense, and it is quite possible that the supervisory duties were carried on no less efficiently than they had previously been by the foreman of works, visited daily by the officer of Royal Engineers.

From the outbreak of war, and for nearly two years afterwards, the headquarters administration of the supply branch of our armies in all theatres except Mesopotamia and East Africa, was carried out at the War Office by one director, five military assistants, and some thirty clerks, together with one "permanent official" civilian, aided by half a dozen assistants and about thirty clerks. It administered and controlled and supervised the obtaining and distribution of all requirements in food and forage, as also of fuel, petrol, disinfectants, and special hospital comforts, not only for the armies in the field but also for the troops in the United Kingdom, representing an expenditure which by the end of the two years had increased to about half a million sterling per diem. Affiliated to this branch, as being under the same director, was the headquarters administration of the military transport service, consisting of some fifteen military assistants and fifty or sixty clerks. The military transport service included a personnel of fully 300,000 officers and men, and the branch was charged with the obtaining of tens of thousands of motor vehicles of all kinds, and of the masses of spare parts needed to keep them in working order, together with many other forms of transport material. The whole of these two affiliated military branches of the War Office could have been accommodated comfortably on one single floor of the Hotel Metropole! Well has it been said that soldiers have no imagination.

The reference made above to the Ministry of Munitions suggests comment on the relations between that mammoth organisation and the War Office. Now, whatever may be said against the Ministry, this outstanding fact concerning it remains, overshadowing all others—it did deliver the goods. But there was one serious mistake made in and by the huge department. Not satisfied with delivering the goods, those at the top wished to lay down what the goods were to be: they devoured the committees and the experts whose business it was to design the armaments of which the army stood in need, and they endeavoured to settle for the soldiers at the front the nature of the munitions that the troops were to have. They even tried at times to allocate the output of the factories in their charge at their own will and pleasure A well-known politician, who had for more than three years been doing his bit on active service, became a leading light in the department shortly before the conclusion of hostilities, and about the first thing he did was to promise, without reference to the War Office, an enormous fleet of brand-new

tanks to an Allied government. As there seems to be a likelihood of the Ministry of Munitions remaining in being after "reconstruction," it is important that the institution should understand its place, and that all concerned should accept manufacturing and providing, but not designing nor allocating, as being the function of their department.

Much has been said and written concerning the reputed blotting out of the General Staff within the War Office during the first year or more of the war. It is not proposed to enter into this here except in reference to two matters, the first being a statement of mine, made in evidence before the Dardanelles Commission and quoted in their published Report, to the effect that "the real reason why the General Staff practically ceased to exist was because it was not consulted" —a statement which attracted attention when the Report appeared. Quoted thus and without the context, that statement, made in reply to a query as to whether it was correct that the General Staff had practically ceased to exist, conveys a wrong impression. The Commission was concerning itself with the initiation of the Dardanelles venture and its opening phases; it was a question of the conduct of certain amphibious operations of war at an early stage, and the situation would have been more correctly described had the statement read: "The real reason why the General Staff practically ceased to exist was that in respect to operations it was not consulted."

A General Staff, needless to say, deals with many other subjects besides actual operations — collection and distribution of information, secret service, training of officers and troops, and so on—and it performed those functions at the War Office during the early days of the war just as had been contemplated in peace time. Indeed one was consulted at times even in connection with operations as to simple matters of fact. When, for instance, after it had become plain that Sir I. Hamilton's forces were held up completely both at Helles and at Anzac, and somebody on the Dardanelles Committee wanted to embark on an undertaking at the narrow Bulair end of the Gallipoli Peninsula, we were instructed to furnish a short note as to possible landing-places. The information existed in a printed book. The right way to have approached such a project would have been for members of the General Staff to have met members of what was then the War Staff of the Admiralty, for them to have discussed the problem in all its bearings, and for them then to have prepared a joint considered report on the subject as a whole for the information of the Dardanelles Committee. Had that procedure been followed when the Dardanelles and Constantinople scheme was first mooted, had the problem been thoroughly investigated by a

joint committee of the War Staff and the General Staff without the presence of Cabinet Ministers, our naval forces would never have been committed to the creeping form of operations against the Straits in the absence of military support, the campaign (if undertaken at all) would not have commenced until an army was available and the weather had become settled, and it is likely enough that the whole project would have been incontinently dropped in deference to professional opinion.

Very few officers in the regular army are conversant with international law. Nor used they, in the days before 1914, to interest themselves in the status of aliens when the country is engaged in hostilities, nor with problems of censorship, nor with the relations between the military and the Press, nor with the organisation, the maintenance, and the duties of a secret service. Before mobilisation, these matters were looked after by a section of the General Staff under an officer of wide experience, who had made them a special study and who had devised the machinery for performing duties, which on the outbreak of war suddenly assumed a cardinal importance and called for administration at the hands of a large personnel. But on mobilisation the officer took up an important appointment with the Expeditionary Force, and disappeared, charge of his section being taken by an extremely capable and energetic substitute, who, however, suffered under the disability of an entire lack of familiarity with the class of work that he was suddenly called upon to perform. The section was, moreover, under the general control of an official who knew nothing about these matters at all—myself.

Three or four days after the declaration of war a brace of very distinguished civil servants, one representing the Foreign Office and the other the Home Office, came across Whitehall by appointment and with long faces, and the four of us sat solemnly round a table—they, the above-mentioned officer and I. It appeared that we had been guilty of terrifying violations of international law. We had seized numbers of German reservists and German males of military age on board ships in British ports, and had consigned some of them to quarters designed for the accommodation of malefactors. This sort of thing would never do. Such steps had not been taken by belligerents in 1870, nor at the time of the American War of Secession, and I am not sure that Messrs Mason and Slidell were not trotted out. The Foreign and Home Secretaries would not unlikely be agitated when they heard of the shocking affair. Soldiers, no doubt, were by nature abrupt and unconventional in their actions, and the Foreign and Home Offices would make every allowance, realising that we had acted in good faith. Still! And they regarded us with compassionate displeasure. Will it be believed! My assistant

and I knew so little about our business that we did not then and there fall upon that precious pair and rend them. We took their protestations and themselves quite seriously. We accepted their courteous, but uncompromising, rebuke like small boys caught stealing apples whose better feelings have been appealed to. For the space of two or three hours, and until we had recovered our wits, we remained content, on the strength of doctrines enunciated by a couple of officials fossilised by dwelling in a groove for years, to accept it as a principle that this tremendous conflict into which the Empire had plunged at a moment's notice was to be a kid-glove transaction. Immersed in the slough of peace conditions, age could not wither nor custom stale the infinite incapacity of some public servants in this non-military country of ours for conceiving any other state of things.

A MINE-FIELD.

"WIRELESS message, sir." A crumpled and rather wet piece of paper was handed through the wheel-house door.

"Right, thank you," said Jones, the officer to whom this remark had been addressed, taking the message in his hand and glancing at it. "I'll send down if there is any answer."

He stood at the wheel-house window for a moment watching the wireless operator dodging the showers of spray which were breaking over the ship as he ran back to the wireless room, and then raising his glasses to his eyes he carefully examined the horizon ahead of him.

It was as peaceful a scene as one could well imagine anywhere in the world during the year 1916. A moderate wind was blowing, just sufficient to turn the tops of the waves into streaks of white foam, which shone and glistened in the bright sunshine. The land was plainly visible about five miles away, rising in steep cliffs of red granite straight out of the sea, and the numerous bays and headlands could be clearly distinguished. In some of the clefts in the cliffs masses of dirty snow which had defied the warmth of the summer sun could still be seen, and as far as the eye could see the land was a striking picture of peace and desolation.

A few gulls were flying about, and occasionally a school of hair seals would show themselves on the surface and gaze inquisitively at the ship and then dive with a noisy splash, to reappear a moment later at a safer distance. Otherwise the sea appeared as deserted as the land. In fact there was nothing whatever to be seen except the six British trawlers who were employed at the time of my narrative in the monotonous though at times dangerous pastime of mine-sweeping, and at occasional intervals a moored buoy which marked the ship channel. These buoys were necessary to enable the trawlers to maintain their correct positions while sweeping, and to ensure that the shipping which used the channel should pass over the area which they had swept.

Having satisfied himself that everything was normal and that the rest of the trawlers were in their correct positions, Jones turned to address the skipper, who was standing near him. "Keep an eye on them while I am below, Stephens, and let me know at once if anything is wanted. If the *Sandfly* gets any farther astern hoist the signal to increase speed again. I am going down to decode this message."

"Very good, sir," said Stephens, the skipper, a brawny Yorkshireman, who was standing with his head through one of the wheel-house windows, his legs well apart, and with a large bowl of black-looking tea in his hand; "but as I've often

said, you can't rightly expect a class of vessel like that *Sandfly* there to keep up with the likes of us; she ain't built same as these Hull boats."

"No, perhaps not," said Jones, "but I've never noticed her very far astern when we are on our way into harbour; she can do better than she is doing now if she likes."

"Those Scotch-built boats are all very well for the purpose for which they are constructed," continued the skipper, warming up to his favourite discussion, "and if you notice . . ."

"That's all right, skipper," interrupted Jones, who by this time was half-way down the ladder leading from the wheel-house to his small cabin immediately below, where he extracted the code from the box in which it was kept. Stephens, his skipper, was an incorrigible believer in everything, either men or ships, which came from his native town of Hull. Fortunately for his own peace of mind, he was skipper of as fine an example of a pre-war Iceland trawler as had ever been turned out from that port, and he was extravagantly proud of her.

No one knew better than Jones himself what a fine sea boat the *Sir Thomas Dancer* was, and how well built and fitted; but though she had these and many other attributes, she was not at all a fast ship; in fact, in smooth water she was one of the slowest of the group. However, nothing would ever convince Stephens that she was not a regular ocean greyhound, and Jones had long ago given up arguing the matter.

He sat down with the signal in front of him and commenced to decode it. "I hope it's a trifle more interesting than the last dozen I've had," he said to himself; "but it's probably some more rubbish about aircraft codes or something as equally useless in this benighted part of the world, where an aeroplane or a zeppelin is even rarer than a glass of beer or a mail."

The message in this case, however, turned out to be quite interesting. It was from the cruiser stationed in the harbour on which the trawlers were based, and read as follows: "Master of s.s. *Baron* reports that he passed close to a floating mine at 6 A.M. to-day about half a mile north-east of No. 15 buoy. Report appears to be reliable." Jones replaced the code in its box and climbed up into the wheel-house again. "Well, skipper, how is the *Sandfly* getting on now?" "She is catching us up a bit, sir," said the skipper, rather reluctantly, "so I've whistled down to tell Arthur to give her all he can." Arthur was the chief engineer, also a Hull man, and the two men saw eye to eye on all matters which concerned the reputation of their ship or their native port.

"Going fast enough for us after all, is she?" said Jones with a smile. "Anyhow, here's another of these floating mines reported, so we shall have to slip our sweeps and

go down to have a look for it. Signalman, hoist the signal to wheel four points to starboard, and have the signal to slip ready."

The flags for the wheel were duly hoisted, and Jones stood watching the other five trawlers' masts for the signal to be repeated. "All repeated except the *John Brown*, sir," said the signalman down the voice-pipe. After waiting three or four minutes the signal was slowly repeated in the *John Brown;* the order to haul down the signal was then given, and the six trawlers turned in good formation to starboard and steered out away from the channel which they had been sweeping.

This necessary precaution was always carried out before slipping the sweeps, as it is quite possible for a pair of trawlers to have a mine in their sweep for some time without knowing it, and should they slip while still in the channel the mine might remain undetected in the path of shipping.

When about a mile clear of the channel the signal to slip was hoisted and duly repeated by all five without loss of time, and for the next ten minutes steam was to be seen pouring out of the funnels of the trawlers as they lay in the trough of the sea heaving in their wire hawsers with their huge steam winches.

When the last one had finished, Jones gave the order to hoist the signal to form single line abreast to starboard, ships one mile apart, course to be steered south-east. Once again the *John Brown* was the last ship to repeat the signal.

"Haul down," said Jones, "and now hoist to *John Brown*, 'Pay more attention to signals.'" The *John Brown's* answering pendant was kept at half-mast for some time, before being hoisted close up to indicate that the signal was understood. "Must think we've made a mistake in our signal, and that it can't be meant for him," growled Stephens, who had been gazing at the trawler for some minutes through his glasses.

The signal to look out for floating mines was then hoisted, and this was slowly repeated down the fast extending line of ships, who by this time were opening out on to the five-mile front they had been ordered to take up.

A careful observer would have noticed a man climbing up on to the forecastle head of each trawler, from which position he was able to locate any object floating in the water close under the bows.

This formation was maintained for the next few hours, but nothing was seen. The line of trawlers covered and extended about two miles each side of the ship channel, and made it quite certain that any mine floating in or near the channel would be seen.

It was now about 5 P.M., and there were only about four hours more daylight. Jones ordered the signal to be hoisted to turn together sixteen points, and as the signal was hauled down each trawler turned completely

round, and commenced to retrace her steps in the opposite direction.

"I think it must be a false alarm after all," said Jones to Stephens, who had just come on deck again to keep the first watch, "but we'll run back over the spot again before dark to make sure we haven't missed it. I have had a look at the tides, and by now the mine ought to be in the same spot as where it was seen, and what wind there has been has been up and down the channel, so that I don't see how we could have missed it if it had been there."

"No," said Stephens, "nor me neither; but I don't place much reliance in these reports from merchant ships,—more likely a porpoise or an old tin can than a mine. It's my opinion, sir," he continued, "that we shan't get any mines up here this year; depend upon it, the spies in Hull have told these Germans that we are up here sweeping, and they'll know it would be waste of time sending any up here now."

"I don't know about that," said Jones, "but certainly so far this year they have rather neglected us. Mr Rendle in the *Foam* was very indignant about it the other night in the mess, and blamed our Admiralty for it. He wanted me to write a letter to complain about it, but I said that I was afraid it would not come under the heading of a legitimate grievance, as defined by the King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions. He insisted, though, that some one was responsible for what he called the dull time he was having, and thought that the Admiralty and the Foreign Office might share the blame equally, and said that so far in this war everything went to show that people who were far from home were neglected by the authorities."

"Well, sir," said Stephens, "it may be dull, but I prefer it to too much liveliness. I had a letter from my brother-in-law, who is working out of Lowestoft, by last mail, and he said that things there were altogether too lively for his way of thinking, though he could not say much, of course, on account of this 'ere censor."

"It will be dark in a couple of hours," said Jones, "and we shall have to give up this wild-goose chase. Hullos, what is that?"

"The *Scurry* has got something up, sir," said the signalman, "but I can't distinguish the flag, and the *John Brown* has not repeated it."

"Edge in towards her," said Jones to the skipper, as he tried to keep his telescope focussed on the small piece of bunting floating half-way up the mast of the distant trawler. "I wish this confounded ship would keep still," he added a moment later, "I can't keep my telescope on it for a second."

"Why, sir, she's a deal quieter than the *Sandfly* there," said the skipper in an aggrieved voice; "you ought to be in one of those Aberdeen boats for a bit to know what a really lively ship is."

"Rubbish," said Jones irritably; "all these blooming

trawlers are the same, but I am pretty sure that it is the flag for a floating mine in sight."

At that moment the look-out on the forecastle announced that he could plainly hear rifle-firing. "Hoist the signal to cease firing at once," said Jones. "I hope to goodness they won't hit it, as I particularly want to examine it to see what type it is."

By this time the *Sir Thomas Dancer* was closing the trawler which had sighted the mine, for a mine it undoubtedly was, and though they had been firing at it for some minutes it could still be seen bobbing about on the surface. As the signal to cease fire was repeated the firing gradually ceased. The *Sir Thomas Dancer* steamed slowly up and stopped about fifty yards from the mine.

"Who the devil is that firing still?" said Jones angrily, as a bullet whipped up the water about thirty yards from the ship, and quite a hundred yards from the mine.

"The *John Brown*, sir," said the signalman promptly.

"Damn the *John Brown*," said Jones; "tell her to come within hail."

Meanwhile every glass and telescope in the ship was levelled on the mine. "It looks very low in the water," said Stephens. "I expect one of them sharpshooters must have hit it after all. I think I can make out a hole between the two right-hand horns."

"Yes," said Jones, "it will sink all right in the end, but I believe that mine is moored. Can't you see a ripple going past it."

For the next few minutes every eye was endeavouring to detect signs of a ripple, which would show that the mine was held in its position by moorings. It was soon evident that Jones had been right: the mine heeled over gradually to the tide, which was beginning to "make," leaving a distinct wake on the surface of the water, and a few minutes later it disappeared beneath the surface.

"By Jove," exclaimed Jones, "there's no error about that—it is a moored mine of quite a new type, so you can be sure that it is not the only one that has been laid. That particular one won't cause us any more trouble now though, as it will soon sink with that hole in it, once it gets down below the surface."

He rapidly took bearings of the two channel buoys still in sight in the failing twilight, to enable the position of the mine to be placed on the chart, and then moving the ship about half a mile clear of the channel, he told the signalman to tell the *Scurry* and the *Ben Nevis*, the two subdivision leaders who were with him, to come within hail.

"Ay, ay, sir," sang out the signalman, "here's the *John Brown* close under the quarter."

Jones had forgotten about the *John Brown*, but picking up the megaphone he walked out on to the verandah and hailed her. The smiling face

of a man of about fifty years of age looked out of the wheelhouse window and politely wished him good evening.

"Good evening, skipper," said Jones; "I wanted to find out why your signalman is so slow—he is always last, and delays everybody."

"Well, sir," said the skipper, with a broad Tyneside accent, "you told me to pick out the most suitable man for signalman when we commissioned, and I chose this man on account of his having been a signalman for three years before he joined up. Still, I will say that he don't behave at all as if he was used to the work, and it's my belief he knows no morse at all."

Jones raised his megaphone to the level of the upper bridge, where the signalman was standing, and hailed him. "Why are you so slow at repeating and answering signals? You are the worst signalman in the whole fleet, and there is no excuse for you at all, if you have had three years' experience before you joined up."

"I does my best, sir," replied the signalman, "but I'd like to explain that there was some little misunderstanding between me and the skipper over this signalling job. The day before we sailed, the skipper, he asked if any of us deck-hands had done any signalling before, and none of us said nothing until one of the blokes said, 'Why, this man has been a signalman for three years.' So the skipper he says, 'All right, Joshua Tancred, you take on signal duties,' and would not give me the chance of hexplaining the mistake."

"I don't understand," said Jones; "what was the mistake?"

"Why, sir, my signalling that I used to do before the war was altogether different to anything of this sort. I was attached to one of them there steam-rollers."

"Well, you must try and improve," said Jones, doing his best not to laugh; "at present you are the worst signalman in the squadron."

"I am sure I always does my best, sir," said the man, looking rather hurt.

"All right, skipper," said Jones, "you will stay in company with me to-night. Oh, by the bye, why did you go on firing long after every one else had ceased firing, and who was it who was shooting so infernally badly—he nearly hit us?"

"It was our petty officer here," said the skipper. "He tells me he was a marksman last time he went through the range."

"When was that?" said Jones to the petty officer, a white-bearded man of anything up to sixty years of age, who was standing on the upper deck.

"In '96, sir, when I was requalifying after paying off the *Ramillies;* but I'm afraid my eyesight ain't what it was."

"Here's the *Scurry* alongside the other side, sir," sang out the signalman from the upper bridge.

Jones walked round the verandah to the other side and

raised his megaphone. The R.N.R. lieutenant poked his head out of the wheel-house window and saluted. "Oh, Hulton, will you take the *Sandfly* and go down the channel to the southward for fifteen miles and intercept any shipping that may be on its way north? If you manage to stop any one, sweep them through at daylight, but, anyhow, meet me here again at 5 A.M."

"All right, sir," sang out Hulton. The ring of the engine-room telegraph could be plainly heard, and he and the *Sandfly* were soon out of sight in the darkness as they made their way south.

The *Ben Nevis* was then given similar orders to go to the northward, and before long the *Sir Thomas Dancer* was lying to a stream anchor on the end of her wire within about a mile of where the mine had been sighted, with the *John Brown* keeping close to her.

Jones then set to work coding wireless signals to the senior naval officer and to the various patrols and units, reporting what he had found and suspected, giving instructions for all traffic to be held up for the present, and ordering eight more trawlers to make their way down to join him at daylight.

After eating his supper and smoking a pipe or two, Jones settled down to get what rest he could; but it was a long time before he could go to sleep. He wondered what the morrow would have in store for his ships and men, and whether they would really find a big mine-field or not; and when at last he did drop to sleep he was constantly disturbed by dreams. He dreamt that he was being pursued down a road by a fast and heavy-looking steam-roller, which was trying to catch him, and standing on top of the roller was a man in naval uniform, who was morsing very fast and quite unintelligibly with a large red flag. At last things in his dream got very serious indeed, and, just as he seemed about to be squashed flat, the monster fell with a loud crash into the ditch close to him, and Jones woke with a start to hear the mate's voice from the wheel-house, "It's come on thick as a hedge, sir, and there's just been a big explosion away to the south'd or east'd, which sounded like a mine going off."

Jones hurried up into the wheel-house and looked out. It was literally as thick as a hedge, and any attempt to go to the rescue of the luckless ship which had struck the mine they had heard would have been sheer madness, especially as they had very little idea from where the explosion had come. He summoned the wireless operator, and told him to call up the *Scurry* and find out if they had anything to report, and was relieved to get an answer almost at once to say "No," but he remained on deck for the rest of the night listening, and cursing the fog.

By 4 A.M., however, a gentle land breeze sprang up with the

first streak of daylight, and by 4.30 the visibility had improved to about a mile. The anchor was weighed, and, with the *John Brown* following, Jones made his way slowly back to the rendezvous, and by 5 A.M. was gratified to find that all the other twelve trawlers ordered to meet him there had arrived in spite of the fog.

He hastily inquired if any one else had heard the explosion in the night, and though all four who had been with him the day before had heard it, no one seemed able to say where it had occurred.

This was not surprising when one remembers that the explosion of a mine can be distinctly felt and heard for twenty miles on a calm night.

Orders were then given to commence the day's sweeping as soon as possible. The fourteen trawlers were divided into two groups of seven; Rendle in the *Foam* was told off to take charge of the group which was to sweep north, and Jones took charge of the others himself, intending to follow the channel to the southward.

The slowest trawler in each group was left out of the sweeping as spare number, ready to sink any mines which might be brought to the surface or to fill a gap if one occurred, and the remaining six pairs passed their sweeps and proceeded.

Jones led the line of sweepers to the southward in the *Sir Thomas Dancer* with the *John Brown* as his partner, steering so as to pass close to the channel buoys. The other two pairs with him were on his quarter in echelon, so that they covered as large an area as possible without leaving any gaps.

Orders were given to all the men who could be spared to remain on the upper deck, and all hands wore their lifebelts.

There were many anxious faces to be seen that early morning in the cold grey twilight, and there was no need to warn the look-outs not to go to sleep, as every one realised that at any moment a mine might explode and blow their small craft to bits under their feet.

For the first twenty minutes or so every one in the *Sir Thomas Dancer* was undoubtedly rather "on edge," experiencing the sort of feeling that a man might have if made to walk through some thick grass where he knew there were half a dozen puff-adders asleep.

But by the time half an hour had passed things became more normal, and Jones sent down to the galley for his third cup of cocoa.

He was in the act of drinking this when the ship gave a sudden lurch and shudder and a terrific explosion occurred close under the quarter. At first nothing could be seen but a huge column of water and a dense mass of black smoke, but as these cleared away every one was relieved to see the *John Brown* evidently undamaged.

The mate, who was on the upper deck, sang out to say that the explosion had parted

the sweep wire, so Jones at once signalled to the pair astern of him to take his place as leader of the line, and commenced rapid preparations for joining up the sweep again astern of the last pair.

In a few minutes a signal from the now leading pair of trawlers announced that a mine had broken surface in their sweep, and some lively though futile rifle practice was made by the men with rifles in an endeavour to sink it before it got too far astern.

The odd trawler then bustled up to perform her allotted work, and after expending about forty rounds of ammunition a lucky shot struck one of the horns, and up it went with a loud explosion.

A number of small pieces of mine fell on the decks of the trawler, and there was a scramble for these much-prized souvenirs.

Meanwhile the *Sir Thomas Dancer* and *John Brown* had managed to join up their sweep again and were following the other two pairs.

To join up it is necessary for the two trawlers to come quite close to one another to pass the hawser from one to another, and on this occasion there had been a good deal of chaff between the two crews on the advantage which the change in the position in the line had brought to the *John Brown* in the way of probable immunity from striking a mine.

The two leading trawlers in a sweep of this sort both run equal chances of striking a mine, the odds against such a misadventure being about 30 to 1 for every mine they sweep up. In the case of the other pairs astern, however, one of each pair is sheltered by the sweep of the pair ahead.

In this case the change had resulted in the *John Brown* being the sheltered ship, whereas the *Sir Thomas Dancer* was the outside ship, and so took equal chances with the leaders.

As the ships separated again to open out their sweep-wire, Jones hailed the skipper of the *John Brown*. "Look out you overlap properly, skipper, and don't leave a gap, whatever you do." "All right, sir," said the old skipper with a grin, "I'll look out for that."

It was now about 8 A.M., and Jones was contemplating breakfast, when a shout from the look-out man announced that the second pair had swept up another mine, and Jones and several of the men in the ship amused themselves with some long-range firing at it with rifles as it passed them well away on the beam.

The spare trawler came up almost at once and commenced firing at it, and after about five minutes it slowly sank, riddled with holes.

Jones then retired down below to breakfast, and was on his way up the ladder again when another big explosion occurred close at hand. He rushed up and looked out through the open windows. For several seconds there was

nothing to be seen, and then, as the smoke cleared away, the remains of what had been the *John Brown* were seen rapidly disappearing.

For a minute or more not a word was spoken; a deathly stillness seemed to have fallen on every one, and it was obvious that every one in the ship was deeply affected. Their own friends, men with whom they had been chaffing five minutes before, had been literally blotted out of existence in the twinkling of an eye; at least, it appeared at the moment impossible for any one to be alive.

Then the men recovered themselves, and there was a rush to get the clumsy boat out. The *Sir Thomas Dancer* steered over towards the scene of the disaster, and almost at once there were shouts from the look-out that there were several men in the water, and one of them anyhow seemed to be alive.

The boat was got out in marvellously quick time, and the man was rescued from the icy-cold water and laid in the bottom of the boat, and a rapid search was made among the floating wreckage for others. Two more mangled corpses were picked up, but the remaining eleven men had all gone down with their ship.

The mine had done its work most thoroughly, and with the exception of the one man, who it turned out had been standing right in the bows of the ship, every soul was killed.

The warmth of the *Sir Thomas Dancer's* cabin, a stiff tot of brandy, and a change of clothes worked marvels, and three days later the man had returned to duty apparently none the worse.

"What a ghastly thing," said Jones to Stephens who was standing near him in the wheel-house; "I would have sooner it had happened to almost any one else than that skipper, he was such a particularly nice man, and it was so funny that he should have the same name as his ship."

"Why, sir, she was his own ship which he had built for him before the war, and he used to fish in her regular, and seven of the crew were relations of his," said Stephens. "He was one of the best-known men, and one of the best fishermen out of Shields."

"I never knew that," said Jones, "and I must say I wish now that I hadn't strafed that signalman yesterday. Poor chap, he said he was doing his best, and certainly he could not have done more than he has now. Well, I suppose we must get to work again, and we shall have to sweep with the *Sparrow* now."

The six trawlers retraced their steps for several miles and then re-formed line and sweeping was continued, but except for one more explosion in the sweep of the second pair nothing more was found that day.

About 4 o'clock in the evening the look-out reported an object in sight about five miles ahead, which he thought was not unlike a submarine. It

was a perfectly calm evening, and there was a great deal of mirage about.

The most extraordinary effects are produced by this mirage or refraction on the horizon. Sometimes a ship will appear upside down, and sometimes the real and the inverted images will both be visible, one above the other. A buoy will sometimes look like a factory chimney, and sometimes like a low flat island.

No one seriously thought it was in the least likely that it was really a submarine: these elusive craft are not fond of trawlers, and are not in the habit of waiting considerately on the surface till trawlers approach them.

When the object in question was close enough to be distinguished, she turned out to be a portion of a small sailing schooner with the main lower-mast standing. She had evidently struck a mine and had been completely cut in half, the stern of the ship being practically undamaged. A boat was despatched to examine her, but there were no men on board, though it subsequently transpired that three of the men who had been asleep in the cabin had been unhurt and had escaped in a dinghy which was hanging over the stern.

"That is satisfactory," said Jones—"that accounts for the explosion we heard last night; I was afraid it might have been a big cargo vessel."

At eight o'clock that night the thirteen trawlers rendezvoused to compare notes and arrange the next day's sweeping. Before dropping anchor the melancholy task of burying the two men who had been picked up from the *John Brown* was carried out. The bodies had been carefully prepared for burial, the trawlers all stopped close together and the white ensigns were all lowered to half mast.

The touching words of the burial service were read by Jones, and at the conclusion of the appointed prayers in the Prayer Book he turned to the prayer for those at sea and read the words which might have been specially written for men engaged in the work on which they were employed—"that we may be a security for such as pass on the seas upon their lawful occasions, . . . and that we may return in safety to enjoy the blessings of the land with the fruits of our labours."

The trawlers then anchored in a small bay for the night, and the work of plotting the mines destroyed on the chart and arranging for the next day's labours was undertaken.

It was after eleven before any of the officers were in bed, and the ships weighed again at 3.30 A.M., as it was imperative that no time should be wasted in clearing the channel. Shipping was being held up at both ends, and even in 1916 shipping was too valuable to be allowed to waste an hour more than could be helped.

One more trawler joined up at daylight, and the fourteen recommenced their work in

exactly a similar manner as they had done the previous day and continued it till dark.

It was three days later, and the captain's clerk in the senior officer's ship had just settled down to his afternoon sleep (or "cork" as he called it). Not that he was in the habit of sleeping regularly during the afternoons, but he had been up a large part of the night coding messages, and the afternoon was hot, and the mosquitoes were unusually active on the upper deck.

He was awakened about 2.30 by the messenger from the wireless room, who handed him a coded message. It must be left entirely to the reader's imagination to guess what that clerk said, but he did say it all, and his earlier education in a gun-room had not been wasted.

Still, in spite of what he said and thought, he hurried off to interpret the signal.

It read as follows: "*Sir Thomas Dancer* to H.M.S. *Batchy*. Channel now clear for traffic to proceed. Twenty-six mines destroyed."

Five minutes later the masts of the cruiser were decked with flags instructing the fleet of merchant ships to proceed, and the motor-boat with the boarding officer was flitting about among them, urging them to hurry up and get away.

Before dark that night over one hundred merchant vessels, loaded with every sort and kind of war material, had weighed and were proceeding down the swept channel. Every one of them arrived at their destination safely.

About midnight that same night fourteen weary trawlers felt their way into the anchorage, and almost before the anchors were on the bottom the whole of the crews were fast asleep, absolutely worn out with the strain of five days' perpetual sweeping in a mine-field.

If any of my readers should ever visit a well-known cathedral town in northern Russia, and should have occasion to visit the British Consulate, let them walk upstairs to the little English church which has existed for so long in this quaint spot.

On the left-hand side of the door as they enter they will find a memorial tablet to the brave men of the *John Brown*, "who lost their lives in the performance of their duty."

H. A. le F. H.

THE BENCH AND BAR OF ENGLAND.

BY J. A. STRAHAN.

VII. JUDGES AND PRISONERS.

It was, I think, my friend Mr R. A. M'Call, K.C., who some twenty years ago told me of a conversation in the dock which some member of the Northern Circuit overheard. The prisoner was an Irish navvy who was charged with inflicting grievous bodily harm on one of a numerous force of policemen who had been engaged in effecting his arrest for being drunk and disorderly. When the indictment was read to him the Irishman listened intently; but as the reading terminated in the usual declaration that his conduct was "against the peace of our sovereign lady the Queen, her Crown, and Dignity," he lost all grasp of the subject. Turning to his warder—who happened also to be an Irishman—he inquired in a loud whisper, "What does this all mane, at all, at all?" "It manes," said the learned warder, "that you are being charged with batin' a policeman. Did you do it?" "Av coorse I did," answered the navvy in surprise. "What ilse am I here for?" "Well," replied the warder, "thin say, Not Guilty, my Lord."

When I heard this story I could not help thinking that if it had been the judge himself instead of the warder whom the prisoner had consulted, he would in all probability have received the same advice. It may be due to a high sense of justice, or to an unconscious remembrance of the former inhumanity of the criminal law, or merely to the sporting instinct which every Englishman from the King to the corner-boy possesses—but it is a fact, whatever it may be due to, that an English judge and an English jury are always determined that every prisoner brought before them shall have a fair chance; and that nothing exasperates either of them more than proof or even suspicion that he has not been fairly dealt with, or that all the facts bearing on his case have not been fully disclosed. This feeling is so strong with many judges, that I have often heard them practically refuse to accept a plea of guilty when they have a notion that the prisoner has been induced by what I may call the lower authorities to tender it; and also advise other prisoners much in the same way to plead not guilty when there was no doubt of their guilt, but the judge wanted to hear the evidence of the prosecution to ascertain if he could whether there was no explanation or extenuation of it.

This is the peculiar characteristic and especial glory of English criminal justice, and

the point on which it differs most from criminal jurisprudence as I have seen it administered in law courts on the Continent. There is nothing singularly righteous in English criminal law even as it is at the present day; and in the past it was as cruel and even as brutal as any criminal law that ever existed since the world began. For centuries past, however, its administration, at any rate in the higher courts, has left little or nothing to be desired. Indeed in one way its merciful administration was perhaps at one time not altogether a public benefit, since it was only the humanity of the judges which rendered possible the long-continued inhumanity of the law. But for the judges' humanity, for many a generation every assize must have been a new "bloody assize."

Felony was at common law a crime punishable on conviction with death, followed by attainder and forfeiture of the criminal's property. Benefit of clergy was relief from the death penalty extended on their first conviction of felony to culprits who could read and write. Now there were comparatively few felonies at common law, and all or nearly all had benefit of clergy; but during that time which Disraeli called the period of Venetian Government (which was not altogether fair I have always thought to Venice), every petty legislator who objected to any conduct which he thought detrimental to his own interests introduced to Parliament a bill to make that conduct a felony without benefit of clergy. And apparently such a bill always passed. At any rate, at the time Sir William Blackstone wrote his famous 'Commentaries on the Laws of England,' the number of statutory felonies without benefit of clergy was no less than one hundred and sixty—a number which appalled even such a worshipper of the wisdom of English Law as was that famous jurist. Such a code of criminal justice, if carried out strictly, must have led to revolution in the meanest-spirited race, and a mean spirit has never been the characteristic of the English people; but that effect was saved by the ingenuity by which the judges discovered absurd grounds for quashing indictments and sensible grounds for assisting juries to acquit, or the Crown to pardon prisoners where the crimes charged, though by law punishable with death, were in morals very small transgressions.

And the ordinary boast of old English lawyers that torture was unknown to the law of England is merely a boast, and a baseless one too. It is true, torture to secure evidence or to extract confessions was unknown to English law. The absence of torture to secure evidence is due to the absence of Roman law: it was introduced into Continental law through applying to citizens when, so far as their political status was concerned, they had become little better than slaves, the Roman law procedure which applied to slaves

only. But the absence of torture to extract confessions was due to the fact that it was not needed, since in England confession was not, while on the Continent it was, a condition precedent to a sentence of death, with the consequent attainder and forfeiture.

Judicial torture came into existence throughout Europe at the time when the court of the State may be said to have been ousting the court of Heaven in criminal matters. The ordeal, which was the ancient form of trying culprits, was an avowed appeal to God. The legal authorities, with the advance of civilisation, had begun to distrust this appeal; and in England they introduced instead an appeal to the judgment of the culprit's countrymen. At first this new form of trial was regarded as a favour, but as its superiority was proved by practice it became obligatory, and ordeal was abolished by statute. Still public opinion continued to regard it as a man's right to appeal to the justice of God, and insisted that no culprit should be judicially put to death unless he either confessed his guilt or submitted to be tried by the earthly tribunal. The Continental authorities showed their respect for this public opinion by torturing a prisoner till he confessed, the English authorities by torturing him until he consented to be tried by the King's court. This was the English procedure: The prisoner on being brought before the court was asked, "Culprit, how wilt thou be tried?" If he responded, "By God and my country," he had agreed to be tried by the King's court; and the clerk of the court piously answered, "God send thee a good deliverance." If he did not he was said to stand mute of malice, and means were adopted to compel him to end his muteness. At first these means were by pegging him out in the prison yard and giving him nothing to eat or drink but stale bread and stagnant water on alternate days till he agreed to be tried or died. This, however, when the prisoner was an obstinate person, proved a slow process, and unduly delayed the business of the assizes. So in Henry IV.'s reign pressing was added. By pressing was meant putting a wooden frame upon the pegged-out prisoner and piling heavy weights on it till he pleaded or burst. This was found to expedite matters greatly. Indeed in 1658, in the case of a Major Strangeways, the expedition was excessive: the man died in ten minutes. However, the proceedings here were somewhat irregular, since not content with piling weights on him—which was the strict legal way—the spectators jumped upon the pressing frame. I suppose they were local attorneys who were afraid that if the criminal business was not hurried up their causes might have to stand over to the next assizes.

This pegging out and pressing business was called *peine forte et dure*, and I confess it seems to me a very respectable form of legal torture. And it had to be resorted to pretty often in the case of prisoners with property and families, who knew that if tried they would be convicted, and who refused to plead in order to prevent conviction and attainder, and thus save their property for their families. In ordinary felonies the forfeiture of the convict's land was to the lord of whom it was held, the King having merely the use of it for a year and a day; but in high treason the forfeiture was to the King himself. This led to a difference in practice. When a prisoner charged with high treason stood mute of malice this was treated as a confession of guilty, and conviction and attainder followed. A very strange application was made of this principle, intended to favour the King, on the trial of Charles I. He was charged with high treason against the Parliament and people of England, and he refused to plead. Accordingly he was found guilty without trial.

Peine forte et dure was not abolished till 1772. Then an Act was passed to make standing mute equivalent, in the case of all felonies, to a plea of guilty. In 1827 this was altered, and the law became what it now is: when a prisoner refuses to plead the court enters for him a plea of not guilty, and the trial proceeds just as if he himself had pleaded it.

John Evelyn has given us a very vivid description of torture on the Continent to extract confession. Dating from Paris, 11th March 1650-1, he writes: "I went to the Châtelet or Prison, where a malefactor was to have the question or torture given to him, he refusing to confess the robbery with which he was charged, which was thus: They first bound his wrist with a strong rope or small cable, and one end of it to an iron ring made fast to the wall about a foote from the floore, and then his feete with another cable, fastned about 5 foote farther than his utmost length to another ring on the floore of the roome: thus suspended and yet lying but aslant, they slid an horse of wood under the rope which bound his feete, which so exceedingly stiffened it, as severed the fellow's joynts in miserable sort, drawing him out at length in an extraordinary manner, he having onely a paire of linnen drawers on his naked body; then they questioned him of a robbery (the Lieutenant Criminal being present, and a clearke that wrote), which not confessing, they put an higher horse under the rope, to increase the torture and extension. In this agonie, confessing nothing, the Executioner with a horne (just such as they drench horses with) stuck the end of it into his mouth, and poured the quantity of two bouketts of water downe his throat and over him, which so prodigi-

ously swelled him, as would have pittied and affrighted any one to see it; for all this, he denied all that was charged to him. They then let him downe, and carried him before a warme fire to bring him to himselfe, being now to all appearance dead with paine. What became of him I know not; but the gent. whom he robbed constantly averr'd him to be the man, and the fellow's suspitious pale lookes, before he knew he should be rack'd, betraied some guilt: The Lieutenant was also of that opinion, and told us at first sight (for he was a leane, dry, black young man) he would conquer the torture; and so it seemes they could not hang him, but did use in such cases, where the evidence is very presumptive, to send them to the gallies, which is as bad as death."

Now John Evelyn has here stated the practical defect of Continental torture. Whatever may be thought of *peine forte et dure*, at any rate it ended the matter: the prisoner either pleaded or died. As Continental torture always stopped short of death, it did not always end the matter, and indeed it sometimes put the court in an embarrassing not to say ignominious position. I remember reading in the 'Journal de Genève,' some ten or twelve years ago, of a case which resulted in this way. It occurred in the diary (then published for the first time) which a Genevese kept when travelling in the Canton of Berne some time about the middle of the eighteenth century. It was a murder case. One brother was charged with the actual murder: the other brother with being accessory after the fact in giving him shelter when he was fleeing from justice. Both were tortured to extract confessions. The accessory gave way under the agony, and was duly found guilty and sentenced to death: the actual murderer was of sterner stuff and resisted all efforts to extract a confession, and he could not therefore be convicted or executed. The court was accordingly in the awkward position of having to put to death the man who only tried to save his brother, and letting live the man who committed the murder. How it got out of this dilemma, or whether it got out of it at all, I do not now remember, and I am not sure the diarist told.

I have spoken of the humanity with which criminal justice is administered in the higher courts: this is sometimes not so noticeable in the lower courts. One practice, at any rate, I hope will not be extended—that of appointing judges with no other jurisdiction but to try criminal cases. Speaking from my own experience, which I confess has not been very extensive, such men tend after a time to come to regard themselves as carrying on a sort of war, with the police as their allies and the prisoners as their enemies. When I attended Clerkenwell

Sessions in my youth there were two judges there, and both of them, unconsciously no doubt, entertained this view. On one of them it had the effect of leading him always to go for a conviction; after he had secured that he was considerate and even lenient in his punishments; but if he did not secure it he warned the jury of their weakness by telling the prisoner if they had known his record they would not have acquitted, and if, in spite of this warning, the jury acquitted again, he discharged them with ignominy. The other gave each prisoner a fair run, but when the run was over and the prisoner convicted, he inflicted on him what was often an appalling penalty. Indeed, it was a sentence which he passed in a case in which I prosecuted that led me incontinently to drop criminal practice, in which I had been doing very well. The prisoner, a man over seventy years of age, had been a watchmaker, but had had to abandon his trade owing to failing sight. He had an ancient wife and a paralysed daughter to support. Reduced to abject poverty, he resorted to picking pockets. I think he had already one conviction against him (but I am not sure) when I was instructed to prosecute him. The charge was of stealing a purse from a woman in an omnibus: the purse contained just sixpence. He was convicted; and no sooner had the jury found their verdict than the police ushered into court a procession of bus conductors, who all swore that they suspected him of picking pockets in their buses. The judge passed a sentence on him of five years' penal servitude—five years on a man over seventy for stealing sixpence! The paralysed daughter, who was in court, screamed in horror when she heard the sentence, and had to be carried out in convulsions; the police looked startled; the jury looked uncomfortable; and as for me, I felt *particeps criminis*, and slunk out of court wondering why some decent person did not kick me, and swearing inwardly that that place would never see me more: and it never did. If that prisoner had been tried by a High Court judge, I doubt if he would have received five months. Men practising at these sessions tell me that under Sir Robert Wallace, K.C., who presides there now, such a thing would be impossible; and, from my knowledge of Sir Robert, that is only what I should expect; but the principle of having a man dealing always and only with crime and criminals is, I think, thoroughly bad, and likely with some men to produce bad results.

I do not know what kind of cases are now dealt with at London Sessions, North and South; but in my young days the old practitioners there were always lamenting the days of their youth and deploring the modern degeneracy of spirit among the English people. They told me that when they

started practice there it was no uncommon thing to find at a single sessions a dozen or more high-spirited but low-lived young men of wealth and sometimes of position on trial for outrages on policemen, private enemies, or public decency. Now they said such things were unknown, and ninety-nine out of every hundred prisoners belonged to the class of habitual criminals, defence of whom was profitless in two senses, since they could pay no fee worth receiving and their faces alone were sufficient to convict them on view.

That criminal face is certainly hard to get over; when a prisoner possesses it, as most habitual criminals do, it is a difficult job to induce either judge or jury to believe in his innocence. And yet it is a type of face not infrequently borne by men of blameless lives. The late Mr Henry Labouchere once wrote of a distinguished lawyer politician that he undoubtedly possessed a very legal face; but somehow it did not remind one of the bench or the bar or the well where solicitors sit; and nevertheless you could not see it without thinking of a court of justice. And I myself, when strolling about Paternoster Row and looking at the portraits of the reverend authors of the religious books so much sold there — especially those of the Methodist persuasion — often find my mind reverting to the days when I practised at Clerkenwell Sessions. And it has even been reported that the late Mr Justice Hawkins was requested to leave a certain suburban bowling-green, as the company—who did not know him—were respectable people and not accustomed to associate with ticket-of-leave men. This misunderstanding, however, may have been due not to the cut of his lordship's face but to the cut of his lordship's hair: my own opinion is it arose through the combination. However, I have said enough to show that the stamp of face characteristic of habitual criminals is not confined to them alone.

Still, when one meets it in persons belonging to a certain class of society, it, as one might say, carries conviction. A story is told of the late Lord Justice Mathew which shows its effect on his mind. His lordship was walking one morning up the Embankment on his way to court when one of those rogues who swindle simple people by selling to them painted sparrows saw him and thought he looked a likely customer. Sidling up to the judge, he produced from under his coat the painted sparrow. "Pardon, gov'ner," he said, "but this 'ere bird flew inter my bedroom this morning. It seems a rare 'un: can yer tell me what kind it is?" The judge took out his glasses and looked hard at the bird. Then he looked harder at the man. "No, no," he said thoughtfully, "I can't tell you what kind of bird it is, but from the company it keeps I should guess that it is a jail-bird."

VIII. COUNSEL AND PRISONERS.

A law lecturer I once knew was a gentleman with a hot temper and a caustic tongue. If there was anything that irritated him more than another, it was being interrupted in his lecture by a question, especially when the question was silly, as such questions are apt to be. Once when he was discoursing on the subject of legal disabilities, he had naturally to refer pretty often to idiots and lunatics. A student broke into his lecture to ask what was the difference between an idiot and a lunatic. "I'll tell you," answered the lecturer grimly; "if you were born as you now are, you are an idiot, and if you became as you now are, you are a lunatic."

It would perhaps have been more accurate, and it certainly would have been more polite, if he had described an idiot as a person who never had any brains, and a lunatic as a person who had brains but had lost the use of them; after all, a man must have a head in order to go off it. Dryden has said that great wit is near allied to madness, but nobody ever suggested it was near allied to imbecility. Cunning is, however, near allied to it. Now the average habitual criminal is an imbecile or semi-imbecile, and he has much cunning, and it is just this cunning which gives the police and the lawyers their greatest difficulty in dealing with him.

The average habitual criminal's imbecility is almost incredible. The rule concerning him is one criminal one crime. He learns how to sneak umbrellas at a hall door or luggage at a railway station or parcels from a street van, or to pick pockets, to snatch watches or to play the confidence trick, and whichever of these he learns he does, and he does nothing else. So well is this known to the police that whenever a particular kind of crime is reported as prevalent in a district, they have no doubt as to the quarter in which to find the criminal, though they may not be able to find the evidence to convict him. And so persistent is the habitual criminal in committing his one crime, that you will often find him arrested for committing it again on the very day he is released after "doing time" for committing it before.

This circumstance led my brother, the late Dr S. A. K. Strahan, who was both a barrister and a physician, to inquire into the cause of habitual criminalism, and he came to the conclusion that in most cases it was impulsive: the poor creature had a longing to do a certain act, which was so strong that he could not resist it. My brother wrote a paper setting out this view, and recommending, among other things, that instead of sending wretches suffering from this disease back again and again to prison, an indeterminate sen-

tence not of a punitive character should be passed on them, and that they should be detained and treated as mentally sick men until their minds showed some sign of improvement; and if after a reasonable time no such sign appeared they should be detained permanently, not as criminals but as idiots. This paper he read before the British Association in 1891. It attracted very wide attention, and the lay press, which ignorantly misunderstood it as a recommendation of gentler treatment for persistent wrongdoers, raised a howl of indignation against it and its author. At the present moment almost everything he recommended has been made part and parcel of the law of the land; but he experienced only the persecution—he did not live to enjoy the triumph—of a social reformer.

That is the imbecile side of the habitual criminal. The cunning side is usually as noticeable. Sometimes it is shown in the way he commits his crime, sometimes in the way he hides all traces of it, sometimes in the astuteness with which he conducts his defence, and sometimes in the acting by which he deceives his judge and jury. I only once prosecuted in a murder case, and to this day I am not sure whether the prisoner did or did not deserve a hanging.

It was on the face of it a brutal wife murder. The prisoner was a degenerate of the first water, who, decently connected, had sunk into poverty and lived by what he could steal and what he could wring out of the labour of his wretched wife. That miserable woman had come home one night with less money than he had expected, and he began knocking her about as usual. This time, however, he went a little too far, and she died. The happy relief came early in the evening. The murderer remained along with the corpse all the long night. In the morning he issued from his room carrying a carving-knife, and finding a neighbour had, on leaving his cottage for his work, forgotten to bolt the front door, he entered the house and attacked the wife still in bed with the carving-knife, stabbing her badly in the face. Then he fled, and happening to find another front door on the latch, he entered another cottage and attacked the woman there. Some workmen heard her screams and rescued her and arrested him.

When he came for trial the defence set up was insanity. My instructions contained statements of the prison surgeon and a distinguished alienist, who had been sent down from London by the Home Office to inquire into the state of the prisoner's mind. Both were absolutely convinced that the prisoner suffered from the mania of persecution, and that it was under the influence of this mania he had committed the three crimes. In face of such evidence from my own expert

witnesses and of the strong view of it taken by the judge, there was little chance of a conviction; and yet before the trial was over I had, and I believe many of the jury had too, grave doubts of the prisoner's insanity. From the moment he came into the dock he conducted himself, I thought, just a little bit too much like a lunatic. He professed to want to plead guilty, he interrupted his own counsel, and he hurled abuse at his own witnesses. And yet when, in opening the case, I suggested that possibly his attacks on the two women and his conduct generally since the murder might be intended to suggest insanity, I saw him start violently; and when the judge asked the jury whether it was necessary to call evidence for the defence, I saw a leer of satisfaction show itself on his face. The judge, whose eyesight was far from perfect, saw none of these things; but I think some of the jury did, and suspected that his antics in the dock were mere acting, for they would not take the judge's hint, and it was only after witnesses for the defence had given evidence of the existence of insanity in the prisoner's family, and under strong pressure from the judge, that they reluctantly acquitted. The evidence of family insanity took the police by surprise, and I was not astonished to learn later that on investigation they were far from satisfied that it was true.

I say the jury reluctantly acquitted under strong pressure from the judge. That to any one accustomed to criminal courts elsewhere is one of the most striking characteristics of English criminal courts. Rarely has an English judge to appeal to an English jury for a conviction: not unfrequently he has to appeal to them for an acquittal: everywhere else the juries are only too ready to acquit, and not unfrequently the judge's heaviest and most disagreeable duty is to urge on them to convict when public justice and public safety alike demand it. In Ireland, north and south, this is sometimes the case—not merely in political or agrarian offences where fellow-feeling may affect the jurors' minds, but in ordinary crimes where their own wellbeing and protection are at stake. We have all heard of the case of highway robbery tried at Tralee. The evidence for the prosecution showed that highway robbery in Kerry had become a public danger, and that the prisoners were the leaders of the robber band; yet the jury acquitted them. The presiding judge showed his view of the case by requesting the High Sheriff to detain the innocent men in custody until he had got a good start on his way back to Dublin.

But Kerry, it may be said, is a county by itself even in Ireland. Did not Baron Dowse allege that once when he was the judge of assize there, when the jurymen in waiting were directed to go into the box to be sworn, they all instinctively

went into the dock instead? All the same, dislike or rather irreverence for the law, and in a lesser degree for its representatives, is common throughout the country, and by no means confined to the poorer or disloyal classes. Even the judges themselves have not the same respect for the letter of the law as English judges. Professor Dicey, K.C., once told me how much he was struck by this on one occasion when on a visit to Dublin he was invited to a seat on the Bench in a criminal court. The case being tried was one in which everybody's sympathies were naturally and rightly with the prisoner; but there was not and there could not be any doubt that, however justified morally he might be, he had deliberately committed the offence charged against him. An English judge would have directed the jury that they must convict, dropping a hint at the same time that the prisoner was not likely to suffer severely if they did; and the jury would have promptly convicted. The Irish judge, a Tory and a Protestant, told them that undoubtedly the prisoner had broken the statute made in that behalf, but, he added, they would be a queer set of Irishmen if they could not find a way of getting round an Act of Parliament. Of course the jury acquitted.

And this irreverence for the law extends, as I have said, in a lesser degree also to the law's representatives. For instance, the bearing of counsel towards English judges is far more respectful than that of Irish counsel towards Irish judges, though the social position of the latter in the little world of Dublin is infinitely higher than that of their English brothers in the great world of London.

I myself am inclined to regard this want of reverence for the law as due not to any sympathy with crime, but mainly at least to the fact that the law in Ireland is not Irish law: it is the law of the stranger; and however just it may be—and once it was very unjust—it commands no loyalty and allegiance as an institution native to and racy of the soil. In England it is very much the reverse. The whole civilised world has produced only two great systems of law—the English and the Roman—and between them they now divide it. Englishmen did not forget this when their law was merciless; they are not likely to forget it now when it is merciful. But something must also be allowed for the national temper. The Englishman is strong and sensible, but he is slow in observing imperfections in anything he has become accustomed to. Unfortunately, however long an Irishman may be accustomed to anything, its imperfections are the first thing he sees in it, and if he is a true-born Irishman it is often the only thing he sees. Sometimes this difference of nature reminds me of the explanation an American Sunday-school teacher gave to one of her class who found some difficulty in understanding how if God was almighty

the Devil should have so free a hand in human affairs. "Oh," she explained, "God is almighty right enough, but the Devil is a deal quicker."

I have already spoken of the humanity with which the criminal law is administered in England. I should also speak of the purity. In no foreign country I know anything about is a charge of corruption against a judge regarded as too ridiculous for even the most foolish to suggest; that is the case in England, and not merely in England, but in every country which derives its system of law and legal administration from England. During the Irish land war, when hatred of the law and of its administrators was rampant, while charges of bias, cruelty, and oppression were freely made, no one so far as I observed ever breathed a suggestion of bribery: everybody felt that to do so would be to write yourself down a fool. And the same is the position, I am told, in India, Africa, and the Crown Colonies, so far at any rate as white judges are concerned. Attempts are still made in India to bribe judges, but the only effect which follows is disaster to the parties who make them.

I have stated in connection with the murder case in which I prosecuted that the judge's sight was not as good as it might have been. Defective vision is nearly as great a deficiency in a judge or counsel in witness cases as defective hearing. Most counsel when cross-examining a witness never take their eyes away from his face unless it is to cast a significant glance now and then on the jury when they have made a point; and very often the whole course of their cross-examination is determined by their observation of the demeanour of the witness under it. A story is told of a case in which certain wills were produced which the claimant under them said he found and his opponent said he forged: the peculiarity about them was that the later the will the more favourable it was to the claimant. Counsel while cross-examining him noticed that from time to time he moved his hand nervously to his breast pocket. "What have you got in that pocket?" counsel suddenly demanded. The witness started, and then said nothing but private papers. "Let me see them," said counsel. The witness demurred, on the ground that they had nothing to do with the case. The judge ordered him to produce them. There proved to be only one paper, and it purported to be another and later will leaving the witness everything.

With judges clearness of sight is equally important: they decide what to believe and what not to believe nearly as much by what they see as by what they hear. That is the reason why the Court of Appeal, where the judges do not see the witnesses, is so reluctant to upset the decision of the court below, where the judge has seen the witnesses, on a point of fact. I have

heard of a certain Chancery judge who was so notorious for the briefness of his notes of evidence, that when a case coming before him was one in which an appeal was probable, the parties agreed to have a shorthand report of the proceedings. In an appeal from him the Court of Appeal read the shorthand report, and were puzzled to make out why he had found against the plaintiff, whose uncontradicted evidence seemed to it to establish his claim. The court sent for the judge's note, in the hope that it might enlighten them, and it did. It consisted of a vigorous drawing of an oily-faced, evil-looking person. Above the portrait was written "The Plaintiff," and below it "And a b—— liar."

I have already told of the lamentations which in my youth I used to hear from the old practitioners at Clerkenwell Sessions over the decline in the class of prisoners who came there. Since then I fear things have gone from bad to worse at the whole criminal bar, so far as such a bar now exists. There are from time to time exceptional cases, usually city frauds, or what the French call crimes of passion, where the defence is able and willing to pay heavy fees; but members of the criminal bar seldom get these: usually a fashionable common law counsel is briefed, at any rate to lead the defence. Dock briefs are more common: these are briefs consisting of a copy of the depositions taken before the committing magistrate, with a back marked a guinea, handed by the prisoner from the dock to one of the counsel in court, no solicitor being employed. These usually go to youthful counsel, who, having nothing else to do, are very glad to take them; but sometimes counsel of good standing accept them, either for personal reasons or because the case is one of public interest.

My friend the late Gerald Geoghegan—whose early and tragic death deprived the Criminal Bar of one of its ablest advocates—told me of a singular experience of his with a dock brief. A solicitor who knew Geoghegan informed him one day that a man Geoghegan had known many years before as a fellow-student at the Temple, had got into trouble for stealing a gold watch and chain. He said he would like Geoghegan to defend him, but he was too poor to pay any reasonable fee. Geoghegan, in his generous way, said at once that he would take a brief from the dock. After he received the brief he had an interview with the prisoner, and came away convinced that the prosecution was a piece of malignant revenge by a former friend. He defended with fervour, and the jury acquitted. The next day he had a letter from his dock client saying how grateful he was for Geoghegan's kindness, and asking him to accept a small present in place of the fee he could not pay. Later the present arrived by registered post. It was the stolen watch and chain.

Of course, whatever the thief intended, Geoghegan handed the watch and chain to the police, who restored it to the rightful owner; for, whether the thief knew it or not, his acquittal, while it prevented his ever being prosecuted again for the theft, did not make the stolen property his. Many thieves do not know this, but some do. I remember being told of a case where the charge was one of stealing a pair of breeches. A young barrister, briefed from the dock, defended and, much to his delight, secured an acquittal. The prisoner showed no desire, however to leave the dock. "You are free, my man," said the young counsel loftily. "You can leave the dock." "I'd rather wait," whispered the client, "till the prosecutor leaves the court." "Why?" asked the young counsel. "Because," whispered the client, "I have them on."

As I have told in another place of the tragedy of my last prosecution, I may perhaps tell now of the comedy of my first defence, though it is against myself. It was a dock brief. The prisoner was a very pretty young woman of what is called doubtful character—though in her case there was no doubt about her character whatever—and the charge was of having stolen a considerable sum of money from a gentleman "friend." When she came into the dock she said she had the depositions, and wanted to be defended by counsel. "Well," said the judge in his most genial manner (as I have said, the prisoner was a very pretty young woman), "there is a row of young barristers on the back benches; any of them will be glad to take your brief." I was sitting on a back bench; I was very young, and my new wig and bands made me look even younger than I was. The prisoner glanced along the benches, and then, much to my consternation, she pointed to me and said, "I'll have him." But consternation is no name for what I felt when, turning to the judge, and apparently explaining to him the reason of her choice, she added, "He's a nice-looking boy."

I was deeply vexed at the time by this remark; but the times change, and we change with them; and now if any woman, pretty or otherwise, could truthfully say the same thing of me, I should be pleased.

(To be concluded.)

"GREEN BALLS."

BY PAUL BEWSHER.

II.

TO FRANCE!

"The wings are stretched: the mighty engines roar;
And from this lovèd land I must depart."

—*Crossing the Channel.*

WHEN I arrived at the Handley-Page aerodrome I realised that, for the second time in the war, I was to have the good fortune to be attached to a pioneering branch of the Air Service, and that, instead of going to a cut-and-dried task, I was to assist in operations which had been untried and were entirely experimental. I had been, as a second-class air mechanic, a balloon hand on the very first kite balloon used by the British, and had accompanied it to the Dardanelles on a tramp steamer early in 1915. Now I was to be the first observer on the huge night-bombers, which were to prove of such tremendous value to the British.

I found the squadron to be as a new-born babe, blinking at the light of day. In a couple of vast green hangars slept two gigantic machines. The skeleton of a third hangar reared its wooden lattice-work against the deep August sky, and everywhere lay heaps of material and stores.

A few officers were already there—among them the squadron commander, whom I soon learnt to know as a giant among men from a commanding point of view. He was one of those splendid leaders that are rare, but are never to be forgotten when they are met—the type of man who, by sheer personal magnetism, could make a body of men achieve almost impossible feats.

On one occasion he wished to move an enormous hangar, complete with its canvas curtains and covers, a hundred feet long and forty feet across, about four times as big as an average cottage. The whole was extremely heavy, and weighed many tons. The C.O. called a bugler, and the call *Clear Lower Deck* was sounded. When every hand, from cook to clerk, had fallen in, he distributed the men round the hangar, gave the order, "One, two, three, *Lift*," and marched the unwieldy structure across the ground to its new position in a few minutes. In this way he re-arranged the whole aerodrome.

The C.O.—"*our C.O.*," as we called him—would never call on his officers or men to do work he would not be prepared to do himself. One day,

in the stress of action on the Western Front, an order came to the squadron to undertake an operation which meant grave danger to the airmen taking part in it. The C.O. decided, against regulations, to pilot the leading machine himself. He never told the senior command, and he knew that he would probably never return to receive censure. However, he would not send out his officers on a dangerous task without himself taking the same risk. Fortunately, the orders were cancelled, but his heroism was not forgotten.

Quickly the station expanded. More and more officers and men arrived. More and more machines landed, and were stowed in the newly-erected hangars.

I soon had my first flight in a Handley-Page, standing on a platform in the back, looking below as though I were on a high balcony. In front of me the two little heads of the pilot and observer protruded from the nose; on either side were the two great engines between the wings; behind me was the thirty foot of tapering tail, with the great double tail-plane vibrating at the end.

One evening I went on the most beautiful flight I ever made. For the only time I can remember, I saw the world look lovely from the air. We were flying in the heart of an early autumn evening, and the west was ablaze with pale gold and decked with rose-tinted clouds. On the country beneath me lay a rich mantle of blue mist. The whole air was warm with the glowing colours of the sunset. Over the machine, over the face of the pilot, and over my hands lay a faintly luminous hue of amber-red. Below there stretched a view of field and farm, and wood and lane, enchanted by the sapphire haze. The world lay under a spell of exquisite beauty, and a tranquillity of peace which was sheer pain to see, so lovely was it. Here and there shone a light in some happy cottage, where the contented labourer sat beside the welcome fire with his wife and children. Far on the right lay the sea, dim and vast, and apprehensive of the night which was advancing with its banners of darkness from the east.

Silently we glided over the unreal world. The sunset faded slowly, and we sank into deeper and yet deeper blue. The gold crept from our faces and hands, and the solemn silence of the evening enveloped us more and more. Soon we drifted low over the trees, whose leaves quivered gently with the fragrant breeze of the twilight. The last shades of dusk turned the landscape into a sombre dream of scarce-seen hills, and the gloomy edge of a woodland. Over a field we floated gently, and ran softly over the dewy grass. . . .

The earth has usually no beauty for the airman. Mountain peaks, valleys, ravines, and curving downs are absorbed in one flat plain, strangely patterned with dull brown and yellow and green shapes, with

dark patches here and there for woods and white ribbons for roads; with black lines for railways, red blotches for villages, grey and brown stains for towns. A person who loves the beauty of nature, and has artistic sensibilities, should never fly. If he must, he should fly only at the edge of the evening, and should glide into the blue magic of the dusk.

Meanwhile, at the squadron, the days of preparation passed —days of superintending the erection of hangars, of sunny flights over the long surf-lined sands, of mushroom picking in the wind-blown grass of the rolling fields. October came, and with it the order for departure.

The great machine was prepared. Heavy tool-boxes, engine spares, tail trolleys, and a mass of material were packed into its capacious maw. The tanks were filled with petrol, oil, and water. The engines were tested again and again. The day came. A pile of luggage stood on the ground beneath the machine; farewells were said; gloves, goggles, boots, and flying caps were collected . . . and it rained.

Back into its hangar went the machine. Back into the tents went the luggage. Back into the mess went the disappointed airmen.

For three or four days this happened, but at last a gentle breeze, a clear horizon, and a blue sky greeted the morning. Once again the suit-cases and trunks were packed inside the machine. I put my little tabby kitten into her basket and tied a handkerchief over the top, and lashed the whole on to the platform in the back of the aeroplane.

The six airmen dressed themselves in their sky-clothes and took their places—the C.O. at the wheel. A whistle was blown; farewells were shouted; the engines roared, and we mounted triumphantly into the air over the countryside of Thanet. For a time we circled over England and saw the villages shrink to red flowers on the carpet of harvest gold and brown plough and dull green meadowland, which was fringed by the yellow and white line of the curving shore. The little haycocks became mushrooms; cows looked like little dots of white and black on the green fragments of the mosaic; and more and more the sea, the wide glittering sea, dominated the landscape.

Then the machine turned S.E. towards France. Looking ahead, with the glorious wind rushing across my face, I could see the three leather-helmeted heads of the pilot, the observer, and the officer in the front cockpit, and below them the shining Channel. Looking through the slats of the platform between my feet I could still see hedgerows and plump red farms. Then we passed over the cliffs whose summits appeared to be on the same level as the sea, and below me I saw the waves.

I was leaving England behind! I had to look back over the tail to see the white line of the cliffs and the sweep of the

Isle of Thanet coast from Birchington to Ramsgate. I began to feel a lump in my throat. I was not eager to look forward to see the first glimpse of France through the sea mist. My thoughts were full of the sadness of bereavement. I knew not what lay ahead—what France and war might bring me. I knew not how long I would be from my own well-known country, or even if I would ever return. Later on, after leave in England, I found no heart-sinkings when I left Dover on a destroyer—for I had grown used to leaving England—but now my departure was potent with sorrow. I felt almost inclined to fling out my arms to the fast-fading homeland.

At last it died away behind me, and France mocked me with its twin line of cliffs and sweep of coast. I lay down on the platform and wrote letters to be posted in Paris. Between the strips of wood on which I lay I could see the grey and silver sea far below me, and here and there a tiny boat, apparently motionless, though a thin line of white foam stretched behind it.

To my horror I suddenly became conscious of the kitten sitting beside me carefully cleaning her paws, and probably supremely unconscious that she was 6000 feet in the air, half-way across the Dover Straits. Apprehensive for her safety I gave her no time to learn her position, but quickly pushed her into the basket, and, undoing my flying coat and my muffler, I took off my tie, which I tied across the top of the basket to prevent the spirited young lady from emerging once more.

Now the machine was almost over the French coast, so I put the letter away and clambered on to my feet to look over the side. Though I was far from the ground, it was easy to tell that the country was an unfamiliar one. The houses had a different tint of red, the villages looked strange, and were arranged differently. The whole country looked peculiar and un-English. It was the opening gate of a new world and a new life.

Over sand-dunes and small pine-woods we roared. Etaples slowly passed us, with its wide estuary spanned by two bridges, and its huge hospital city. Over the mouth of the Somme, near Abbéville, we flew into the brown and yellow autumn-land of France—above old châteaux and their withering parks; above little ugly villages; above long straight roads, lined with trees blown half-bare by the equinoctial gales.

I soon forgot my freezing feet in the interest of reading. As I grew more and more absorbed in 'The History of Mr Polly,' the thundering pulse of the engines and the slight vibration of the machine slipped from my consciousness. The everlasting anæsthetic of literature had rendered me unconscious of being in the air nearly a mile from the ground.

Suddenly the machine began to sway, and to "bump" a little. I stood up and saw that we were passing through the

outskirts of a cloud-bank. Little patches of vapour appeared to rush by the machine, though they probably were scarcely moving. The air grew perceptibly cooler, and every now and then the ground would be hidden, as the white vapour streaked by, under the wheels, in a misty blur. Then suddenly the little houses of a village, a forest, and a curving road would appear far below, only to vanish again behind the next swift-moving edge of white.

We were near Paris. The pilot decided to go beneath the cloud-bank so as to keep on his course with greater accuracy. The noise of the motors stopped, the urgent forward motion of the craft became slower and gentler as we drifted down through the cloud-bank, being thrown up and down a little by the eddies caused by the different temperatures of the air levels.

Soon, in the distance, appeared a slender tower, hanging high above the mist. A great expanse of houses and streets, half-obscured in haze, revealed itself to our left. Here and there sparkled a winding river, and under us were ragged suburbs with great factories and scattered groups of houses clustered round wide straight roads that pierced the heart of the city like white arrows.

Paris! I felt the trumpet-call of the name of a large capital, though Paris has perhaps the weakest name of all. What worthy stirring names do Vienna, Berlin, Brussels, Amsterdam, Rome, and above all, London, bear! In the very sound of them you hear the dying song of long trains gliding majestically into domed stations; you hear the roar of traffic in crowded streets; you hear the dominant throbbing of huge subterranean newspaper presses.

These giant cities with the splendid names should be entered by train. You should thunder over populated suburban roads, and clatter under iron bridges. You should see more and more gleaming rails pouring together in ever wider streams; you should have glimpses of grey old buildings, rising sublimely above a sea of smoking chimney-pots—if you wish to feel the thrill of entering a metropolis.

To approach a great city by the air is disappointing. You can see too great an expanse of it at once. I should dread to fly high over London, lest I saw the fields to the north and to the south of it at once, and realised that this great city of ours *had* limits which were comprehensible by man. It would be a disillusion which would haunt me all my life.

Fortunately it was misty over Paris, and we only saw occasional stretches of boulevard, and white and red houses, half hidden by the haze through which glittered here and there the Seine.

On one side lay the white buildings of Versailles and its wide tree-lined avenues; on the other lay the square ugly factories of the suburbs; between was a great expanse of

field lined with countless sheds —Villacoublay!

With silenced engines we floated lower and lower towards the soil of France. Gently over the trees we glided; above the grass we swept a moment, the machine shook a little, and came to rest below the level of the tall hangars.

A crowd of British and French mechanics and airmen came streaming from all sides to the machine, as minnows dart and cling to a fragment of food which drops into a pool. We climbed out, gladly stretched our legs, and were soon in a car, driven by a French chauffeur in a black leather coat, on the way to Paris.

I mention the French driver and his coat because, in spite of what I have said about the disillusion of approaching a great city by air, yet aerial travelling does at least accentuate a change of country. Just as gradually approaching a city, or a new country on the ground, makes it seem more far-flung and mysterious, so does it introduce you step by step to its personality and language. If you go to France by boat you feel, even at Dover, that you are approaching a foreign country. You hear French spoken, and see French people during the crossing. At Calais you see the strange uniform of the Custom officers and policemen, and a notice in English and French greets you at the side of the quay with its warning against pick-pockets. So you gradually become acclimatised to French ideas before you go ashore.

If, on the other hand, you fly to a foreign country, you are, until the moment when you land, attached by a thread to the place you have left. You dressed there, you breakfasted there, you shaved there, your sandwiches were cut there, and the hot tea in your Thermos flask was heated there —the aeroplane is merely a detached, floating piece of Margate or Broadstairs, or wherever it may be. So when you land the change is abrupt. A man in a curious dress shouts up to you—

"*Ah, Monsieur! C'était bien la-haut?*"

The thread snaps: England recedes a hundred miles in an instant. You are French, and the aeroplane becomes Villacoublay!

We spent several days in Paris. Every morning our car awaited us outside the hotel. Bills were paid; bags were packed; we inserted ourselves into the car and drove to Villacoublay. The weather would be bad, and (to our secret delight) we returned. I got very used to this life after a time. I have left so many various hotels in France, day after day, in the morning, and have returned two hours afterwards, looking foolish, that the proprietors must have thought it was a British custom.

At last the machine started once more—unfortunately without the kitten. She was seen just before we left, but I think she had friends on the aerodrome who hid her at the

critical moment. We delayed our departure while a search was made. It was in vain. We left without the kitten, and (superstitious people note!) were dogged by misfortune until six months later when we acquired a black cat at Dunquerque.

The aerodrome to which we were flying was at Luxeuil, near Belfort, in the foothills of the Vosges. We left Paris and flew towards the East. Slowly the character of the country changed, and the towns and villages grew different. I had a roller map, and as I lay on my chest in the back of the machine I wound forward the map just as the living map beneath unrolled itself. On the paper would be marked a little white line, a little black blob, and a little dark-green patch. Below, in a square frame of wood, I could see a little white road, a little red village, and a little dark-green forest. Sometimes I read for a quarter of an hour and forgot my surroundings entirely, and then I would suddenly become conscious that I was in the air and would look below. There lay a curving river, and a canal beside it, across which was a grey stone bridge.

I would wind my map forwards, and would identify the river and the canal and the bridge. North of the river would be, perhaps, a forest and a railway line. I would look below me; there would be the forest and a thin black line near it, on which was a puff of white smoke coming from a railway engine. The little village which lay near the canal would be marked on the map—*Pont St. Maure*, or something similar. It was to me a name. The red mark below had to me no more reality than the black mark on the map, yet at that very moment it must have been full of housewives cooking fish. Its shoemaker, and farrier, and priest, and mayor must have been busy. Maybe a marriage, the most wonderful incident of some simple country girl's life, was in progress, and as the wedding party walked in a procession they looked up to see the great bird with the shining wings which boomed overhead. To me it was all only a little red patch which had appeared above the pages of 'The History of Mr Polly.' Flying is a strangely aloof business, and gives the aerial traveller at times an almost divine point of view.

Three hours slowly passed. Dusk began to creep across the land. The country below changed more and more. Forests became frequent, and the scenery grew wilder and more interesting. Suddenly the noise of the engines died away. I quickly stood up and looked below. We were just over a quaint town with a curious church tower. I looked round and could see no aerodrome. Lower and lower we glided. The wind whistled and moaned in the wires. I could see no field in which to land. Over the tops of some trees we drifted. A great cluster of shrubs ap-

peared ahead of us above the level of the machine. We swept over it, dropped down again, and I saw we were a few feet above uneven ground. I shouted to the other man in the back to hold on, and got myself ready to take a shock. We touched the ground, bounced up a little, ran along, and stopped in a sloping field near a road.

I jumped out at once and ran round to the front. The pilot shouted—

"Go and 'phone to Luxeuil! Say we've had engine failure!"

On the way to the road I passed a French priest—an amazed little figure in black—who had seen this winged monster drop out of the skies to his feet. Already from the town were pouring the excited people, who had thought at first that our machine was a German one.

Before I got into the town I met a grey naval car, which was attached to the aerodrome, and had chanced to be near, and had followed us when we came down. I hurried back to the machine. It had been landed with wonderful skill by the pilot on a sloping field, into which he had side-slipped. Not a wire of it had been broken in spite of its weight and its heavy load.

The rest of the evening is a confused memory of a high tea in the little hotel—a meal of countless omelettes, grey vinegarish bread, coffee, and butter of sorts: of a long, long drive, sitting in the floor of a crowded car, rushing under the stars and the trees which hissed at us one by one for mile after mile as we whirled down the winding roads: of arriving in the dark at an apparently limitless aerodrome, strangely full of British and Canadian officers in this remote corner of France: of going to bed in the Hotel de la Pomme d'Or in the town of Luxeuil.

The next day we returned to the machine, which was surrounded by an enormous crowd of curious peasants. My pilot wished to open a tool-box, and asked the C.O. for the keys. The C.O., dreading that he might lose them, had handed them on to me. When I looked for them, I found I had lost them! My pilot, in his irritation, stood me up in front of the open-eyed French people and searched me all over. To my shame he found the keys in one of my pockets! The C.O. said to me afterwards—

"Thank Heaven, I gave them to you, or he would have searched me!"

The machine was repaired. The engines were started. I stayed on the ground and helped to keep the field clear. (French people *will* insist on running in front of an aeroplane as it gathers speed on the ground—in order to see it better!) It rose up into the air, and turned round towards Luxeuil, to which I went in a car.

Then began strange months in the wild forest country of the Haute Saône. They were days of flying over the snow-clad country, when you could see, hanging like dream-castles

above the haze of the horizon, the whole panorama of the Alps from the Matterhorn to Mont Blanc—sublime summits, pure sun-kissed white against the thin blue of the November sky. They were days of long drowsy motor drives through the Vosges to the deserted city of Belfort, with its few collapsed houses to give witness of its nearness to the lines. Days in which I became an inhabitant of the historical town of Luxeuil-les-Bains.

This old town was very interesting. Some of its buildings went back to 1200 A.D. Its thermal establishments (so frequent in this part of France, where every town almost is—*les-Bains*) were full of relics of the former Roman baths.

In the old cathedral I saw one of the most crude and striking examples of modernity which I have ever met. As I sat in the tall and gloomy building at twilight one day, the verger asked me if I would like to see how he rang the Angelus. He led me to an old stone room, on one wall of which was a large shiny black switchboard, studded with copper switches and other electrical devices. He pulled down one switch—high in the belfry a bell chimed three times. He pushed the switch up and pulled it down again. Once more the bell chimed three times. He did this a third time, and then rang the bell continuously for a little while.

He seemed to have great pride in such an up-to-date affair, but to see the Angelus rung by electricity in an old church was distressing. He followed up the performance by tolling a knell for the dead. He pulled another lever, and left it down for five minutes, during which a deep bell slowly rang.

"They pay five francs for that!" he said with gusto, as he looked at his watch and pushed up the lever again.

There were no British troops within a hundred miles of the place. The officers and men of the naval flying wing were the only British there, and they must have seemed strange to the French people.

We had amusing evenings, and became quite French in our ways. We dined off frogs' legs and pike fresh taken from the tank in the yard of the restaurant. We went to organ recitals in the cathedral, and paid visits to learn French and to exchange conversations. Of course, in our turn, we introduced the custom of taking tea in the afternoon. Wherever we were in France, we demanded, at four o'clock, tea, bread and butter, honey and cakes. It amazed the French people, but we generally got it. I do not think they understood it at all, because one evening after dinner I asked for a cup of tea instead of coffee, and it came accompanied by a plate of cakes, and, I believe, bread and honey. I had to explain that an Englishman *can* drink tea alone. It is amusing how an Englishman always takes his customs with him, and, instead of doing in Rome as the Romans do, rather makes

Rome do what is done in London.

Bacon and eggs for breakfast; meat and vegetables *together* for lunch; tea and cake and bread and butter and honey for tea in the afternoon — says the Englishman. If he does not get this, he exclaims—"My hat! What a place!" as he walks indignantly out of the hotel.

Among other things, I learnt how to fly, at Luxeuil, and found it very much like learning to ride a bicycle. It has the same fascination and the same characteristics. You have the same certainty, to begin with, that you will never be able to do it; you know the same triumph of achievement when you fly ten yards alone; and when you are flying along smoothly in complete confidence that the instructor is holding the controls and is checking you the whole time, you turn round, see he is looking over the side, become overtaken with nervousness, and dive and climb, and slip and slew, in a fever of anxiety and dread.

The advantage of being able to fly yourself is that if you feel depressed and weary of the ground, and of the people on it, you can get a book, jump into an aeroplane, and shoot up into the solitude of the sky. When you have climbed three or four thousand feet you can bring out your book, and go round and round in great circles far away from the earth in utter seclusion, reading sublime verse, and dreaming of any unreality you desire.

The tranquillity of these days was ended suddenly by a rather welcome order to proceed to the advanced base at Ochey-les-Bains, near Nancy, from which raids were to be carried out at once.

Over miles of ravine and forest, over Plombières and Remirémont and Epinal, over winding river and rolling down, we flew till we approached the region of Nancy, where a few kite-balloons hanging above the haze showed us that we were near the lines. We landed on the wide French aerodrome, and once again met a crowd of English officers in a strange corner of France.

We began to prepare at once for a night raid on some blast-furnaces beyond Metz. My pilot and I had never flown before at night, and had never crossed the lines. With mingled trepidation and excitement we awaited the first voyage amidst the darkness and the stars beyond the frontier of Alsace into what was then Germany—with its unknown dangers and its unknown difficulties.

(To be continued.)

OUR LAND DAYS.

BY E. S. WILKINSON.

WHEN first the appeal for women to come out and work on the land was made, my only thought was—"Well, that is not a job that will ever find me at it, because it isn't going to be any good." I was obviously just the person to volunteer, being tall and strong, and the right age! (Exactly what the "right age" is I will not divulge, but I was not too old or too young.) Also, I had lived in the country all my life, and been good friends with all the farmers in the district. Perhaps this is why I was so full of pessimism. I knew enough about the conditions and hours of farm work to know that it was not *only* contrariness that made a man say, "What's t' use of a lot o' women on t' pleace—what's t' foreman off t' deea wiv a lot o' women when t' weather's rough?—women can't drāve t' 'osses t' ploo', and wheer's off t' larn 'em? I'se seer I s'ant." And though I always made a point of arguing that they had no reason for being so damping till they had given us a trial, I felt that they were right. We *were* no use on the land if we could only do "soft jobs," and how many of us knew what we were in for, and were prepared to stick the rough jobs? So I went on taking my weekly turns at the V.A.D. Hospital.

Boots thought differently. She always had more courage about going for a thing than I had. I will introduce her, and the way she went for it, in the next chapter.

I.—BOOTS.

"It's no use going to work on the land without proper boots!" was one of the first axioms Boots arrived at, and so she got her name.

Now Boots was at first full of the bliss of ignorance, where I had the folly to be wise, so she struck out for the land, and hired a pony trap! The connection may seem remote at first sight, but it must be remembered that this was long before the palmy days of the "Women's Land Army" and the setting up of training centres. The farmers' willingness to encourage and employ women was most conspicuous by its absence, and the only possibility of getting a job was by going round to the farms and demanding work with such persistence that at last, in sheer self-defence, you were taken on. Doubtless the farmer added under his breath, "She won't be here a fortnight."

Well, in the part of the country of which I am writing, the farms are very large and isolated, and tramping round

them in search of work would have been a long and tedious job, so as I say, Boots hired a pony trap and drove.

Whoever heard of a farm hand *driving* in search of work? Boots found it, nevertheless. Not all in a moment though, and only after many refusals, and questionings as to what she thought she was going to do if she came. Luckily, Boots had no idea, and answered, "Oh! anything you like to put me to," and on the basis of that willingness, at last a brave man took the risk and offered her a hoeing job on "piece-work."

On "piece-work," mind you—an amateur will not get rich hoeing by "piece," and if he undertakes to pay his keep at so much a week, he may work ten or twelve hours a day at a loss. But there was the opening, and Boots took it, and put away the pony, and began to turn old clothes into that dignified class of goods called "kit." I can't say I know a great deal about the life and work of Boots after she sallied forth with her kit on this new venture.

I was working in my V.A.D. Hospital in a rather desultory sort of way, and from time to time I had news of "backaching jobs" and "hot harvest fields," and mixed up with them the joy of being up and out in the very early morning. But I was a confirmed pessimist, I suppose, and merely thought "it may be a joy but it isn't any use."

Then Boots' ardour began to wane. Winter was coming on, and with it mud and wind and rain—and through it all the feeling that she wasn't essential, and in fact the thought that if she wasn't there it would really make very little difference. Then one week-end when she was home we chanced to meet, and discovered we had both got the war disease of "I'm sick of my job" very badly, and we decided to throw in our lot together and get a different one. So it came about that, full of importance and bustle, we wrote letters and had interviews, and dreamt of earning £5 a week in a Munition Factory, or £3 as a clerk. The outcome of it all was that we were put down for a new department connected with a Shell Factory, which was to open in a month, and Boots left her farm and I resigned from my hospital, and we began to go about saying good-bye to our friends. And that, to be quite accurate, was my first step towards work on the land. A strange way to start you will think, but sometimes when you follow a new road you suddenly arrive at where you least expect.

II.—THE CALL OF THE LAND.

Yes! there's no doubt about it, the land does call!

If you have once given yourself time to hear and know her voice, you will never forget. Wherever you are, and what-

ever you are doing, it will always come back to your mind.

The earth will teach you to love her carefully; she will not hurry, and if you cannot be content to learn slowly, you will never learn at all. I think, really, the only way to get to the bottom of it is to work in the fields—to be out in them all day, and to come home tired in the evening. I think the land will not be very kind to you unless you are tired in the evening. But let the sun get low, so that the shadows come slanting across the fields, so low that even the furrows you have ploughed have little shadows in them; let it find you with your horses steaming and your feet tired, so that they will hardly swing down the furrow for the last few turns; and then let it be time to "loose out" and go home, with your plough traces jingling by your horses' sides—you won't forget. I can hear them now as I sit here in London.

It was this inexorable call of the land that turned me aside from the new-department-at-a-shell-factory and took me reluctantly to the fields. I repeat reluctantly. Let no one be deceived. I did not hear the call. I suppose I was not listening; and, anyway, the earth calls very softly. But even if she had shouted in my ear, I doubt if I should have heard. My mind was on a lathe, and pounds of wages a week.

Was it likely that grinding away at a job I had already condemned, and earning the large sum of 16s. or 18s. a week, would appeal to me?

But between me and my little lathe were two obstacles. In the first place there was Boots, and in the second the month's delay before our department opened.

I think it was the delay that saved us; if we had been able to start right away it would have been different. Boots would not have had time to find out she must go back. And there we should have been with a clanking, clacking machine, instead of the sound of wind and rain and birds; and instead of weary limbs and sleeps, a frowsty headache.

Not many days of that month had passed before Boots knew she must go back. At first she did not say much about it, as she also knew she had said she would take this other job with me, and felt bound to go on with it. It was no good though. You may loathe the sight of the fields sometimes; you may hate every farm implement in the world, and feel quite certain that if you don't leave in a minute you will become a turnip; rooted to the spot, with mouldy green hair, and no ambition in life but to grow round and fat, and be exactly the same as all the other turnips in all the other rows, in all the other turnip-fields in all the world. But leave the land, and from that moment, though you may not know it, you begin to return.

At last Boots could bear it no longer, and said bravely:

"It's no good, I can't go and work in a town, and be shut up in an office or factory or anything else. I must go back on to the land, and if you don't mind, will you come with me?"

I was certainly a little bored, but the other work was hanging fire, and after all we had thrown in our lot together, so I raked up some false enthusiasm and said "All right."

It was still early days, and work was not to be had for the asking, though a land campaign was afoot, and many meetings called by pioneer enthusiasts. But farmers were still wary, and kept clear of them. They wanted the proof of the pudding without the eating, and I think they thought we looked thoroughly indigestible.

At last, on the strength of her persistent searching and her previous experience, Boots found a job, and after she had been at work a few days the farmer recklessly said he would see her friend (that meant me), and if she seemed a likely sort of person he would take her on as well. I have a very great admiration for that farmer. His friends told him clearly that we should not be there more than a week or two, and he would have all his trouble for nothing. And they also explained to him in detail the amount of damage we should have time to do in the few weeks we survived. However, he stuck to his guns, and as far as I know he did not even insure against female labour. Perhaps the premium would have been too high.

III.—THE BEGINNING OF IT.

I was hired in the cattle-market. I walked in at 10.30 A.M. as a very ordinary mortal of the tennis party, afternoon tea, and summer hats variety, and I left it about ten minutes later as "t'Low-House thuddy," with the prospect of earning 18s. a week, and the possibility of a 2s. rise if I "framed well." The next few days were spent in collecting "kit." Boots and leggings I achieved without any financial loss from the bottom shelf of my father's boot-rack! They were about ten sizes too large for me, but by putting several pairs of cork soles inside them I succeeded in stopping them rattling, and at least they were "Boots," and not brown paper coverings for the feet. Then came the question of where, in the matter of skirts, decency ended and convenience began.

A long skirt was naturally quite out of the question, but no skirt at all was a different matter, and to have appeared then in what is now the accepted uniform of the Land Army, would have distinctly meant asking for trouble. We eventually compromised with "frills." They were rather more than knee-deep, and manufactured from old tweeds, with the help of a pair of scissors. Boots and I used to

meet and have councils of war about these "frills," and full-dress rehearsals. Then we would survey each other from a distance, and cogitate on the difficult point of whether propriety would allow the removal of another inch from the bottom.

At last we arrived at what we thought would be satisfactory from all points of view, and armed with boots and leggings, "frills" and Tam o' Shanters, and an old overcoat, we reached our farm one Sunday night, to plunge into the unknown on Monday morning.

IV.—APPRENTICES.

"Ka-a-ate"—followed by silence—"Ka-a-ate," and a sleepy voice through the wall behind me said "Orl right!" That was the first order I heard given on the farm, and it meant that it was time that Kate, the "maiden," got up and lit the fire. I struck a match and looked at my watch. It was 5 A.M. and pitch-dark! Well! you've done it now! thought I; you're in it! And I lit the tallow candle and jumped out of bed. I didn't take long to dress, or wash either, for that matter—the water was, naturally, as cold as ice, and not encouraging to loiter with,—jersey, coat, frill, and hat were soon in their places, and with my boots in my hand I crept along the passage to my mate's room, and together we stole downstairs in our stocking feet to the kitchen. Every one always puts their boots on in the kitchen in a farm-house, and by this time Kate had got the fire well away, and it was nice and warm. Now I think the inmates of the farm must have been full of curiosity as to what these two women who proposed to work on the land were going to wear; but people of the north country are not wasters of words, and the farmer made no comment except that we were to "get our breakusts" as soon as "they" were ready, and then he would come and "set us on." We finished lacing our boots and leggings, and started to eat breakfast, and I wondered badly what was going to happen next. It was beginning to get light by this time, and nearly 6 o'clock, and about 6 "t' master" came in and took us out! It would not be of any particular interest to explain in detail what we did that day. The jobs were various, and I know for myself I was pretty slow. We spent a good part of the day chopping up some old dead fencing in the middle of a grass field. It was very nearly lambing-time, and it wanted clearing to prevent the lambs getting caught in it when they were turned away there. The chief event of that day, which stands clear in my memory, is thinking it must be nearly dinner-time, and looking at my watch to find that it "wanted" 10 minutes

to 8 A.M.! One gets many shocks of that description when one starts working on the land. In the first place, a twelve-hour day takes a bit of getting used to; but another reason for days seeming long is that the new-comer is not experienced enough to be sent off alone on a job for the day, but is kept round the buildings, dodging about at odd jobs, under the vigilant eye of the foreman. And every true "farm-hand" knows that "dodging about at odd jobs round the buildings makes long days."

At last that first day ended, and we came in to tea. It must not be thought from that that we had hated it, or that as far as I know we had not enjoyed it, but for myself I must confess I was surprised at its interminable length. It did not seem to me like a day at all, only vistas of hours stretching out before me till the farmer came and shouted "Dinner's ready" over the hedge—then an hour that exploded like a squib, and then more vistas stretching away till the sun went down and it was "night." So a week or two passed, and we began to feel our way. To have become expert at any single job I lay no claim, unless it be putting turnips into a cart. (There is more than meets the eye in almost every kind of farm work.) But at least we were finding our feet; we discovered that days did end, and that, however tired you were, the night generally put it right. I began to gain a sort of confidence that sooner or later I should be able to do some useful work, and, greatest achievement of all, the men learnt to understand that we might be raw and we might be slow, but at least we were willing and not afraid of work or weather; and so they thought it worth their while to give us a helping hand, and show us little tricks of the trade for making work lighter and doing it less clumsily. With this began a debt I can never repay, to all the men I have worked with, wherever I have worked. They belong to the land, these men, and they are not quick in movements, speech, or thought. Why should they be? It is not quick wit and an eye to business that ploughs the fields in the autumn, or is responsible for their shining green with corn in the spring of the year. It is indomitable patience and hard clean work. There are no greedy bargains driven when you work with the soil as your partner. She will not cheat you, if you are willing to do your share. Read in the newspaper under the heading "Partnerships dissolved," you will not find amongst them "The Labourer and the Land." The farm men know a lot of things, of which many people never catch a glimpse; they find them out themselves, and sometimes it takes a long time. The land does not say, "I will show you"; she says, "Find out, and it will be worth while." I would say the same about the farm-labourer. He will not show you himself; but "find him out, and it will also be worth while." I know I have found a host of friends.

V.—IN WHICH I PLOUGH.

At the end of three weeks the first strangeness of the life began to wear off. Boots and I felt that, figuratively speaking, we had "put our hands to the plough," and shortly after this the day came when we did it literally. I have been asked over and over again, "Can you plough? Isn't it awfully hard work? And how long did it take you to learn?" so perhaps it would be of interest to write a little of my first experiences. It all began because Bob, "the waggoner's lad," had toothache. It was bad toothache, and he had to go to the dentist at S——, sixteen miles away, which took the whole day. The upshot of it was that to prevent his horses standing idle the foreman told me overnight, "Yer can coom up to t' forty-acre in t' mornin', and see how yer frame wiv Bob's ploo." So "in t' mornin'" I went up to the forty-acre, and there was old Brown with two horses and a plough! The waggoner had lent me one of his horses for my first attempt, and taken the young horse himself. It was very great good-nature on his part to do this, as a waggoner on a big farm always has his own particular pair of horses, and is very loath to let any one else drive them. However, he said, "I thowt it 'ud be best for you to tak' Prince. 'E gangs weel on t' 'land,' and Boxer's a grand old 'oss in t' 'furrow.' Banker 'ere, 'e's a bit ower keen for a start."

Well, Brown, the foreman, took the plough, and I walked beside him down the furrow until he had got the plough set to his liking. Then he said, "Tak' 'old of her—you want to just keep 'er steady, and deean't press ower 'ard on t' 'andles—let her gang wiv herself."

I took hold, feeling very nervous, and she did go more or less "wiv herself" as far as the end. Then I had to turn round, and I hadn't the vaguest notion what to do. The horses knew their part of the business, and started round the headland quite confidently. Behind them, in a trailing tangle, came the plough and myself. Oh yes! it fell over all right, and it nearly knocked me down with it. I left the horses to it, and they trailed it to its place on its side. Old Brown laughed and picked it up, and said he would take it round the next end himself, and then I should see! I certainly saw, and it looked as easy as walking across a road; but a plough doesn't make friends all at once. Brown gave it me back, and I started off again down the length of the furrow; when I got to the end, I turned round to ask for advice, and far away on the other side of the field I saw Brown disappearing on his way to another job!

That was all the ploughing lesson I had officially. The rest I learnt by experience (sometimes very bitter) from the plough itself and my horses — particularly from "little Sam," of whom I will tell you more later on.

VI.—FRESH FIELDS.

Boots and I had not been on this farm a full year when circumstances arose which made it advisable to leave and go to a new "spot."

We did this for various reasons that it would only be tiresome to enumerate, though to avoid misunderstandings it would perhaps be as well to say that it was nothing at all to do with the work, and the really deciding factor was that our master, the tenant of the farm, died, as the result of a riding accident, and the farm was shortly going to change hands. As far as I was concerned I left with many regrets, and though in the matter of knowledge of farm work I knew I had only touched the edge of it, I had at least tried my hand at a variety of jobs, and in many cases learnt some of the ways of dealing with them which it is best to avoid!

Boots and I were engaged to go to another farm before we actually left the old one. We snatched a fortnight's holiday, however, and rushed off to London, where we spent all the wages we had saved, very quickly, and pretended we had never been yokels in our lives. If London had been interested enough to notice us, as we passed, I don't suppose it would have been taken in. There was too much wind and weather in our faces, and too much plough-boy's roll in our steps, for London pavements.

At this new farm we were to be *bona fide* "horse lads," with a pair of horses each to work, and another (used for odd jobs) to look after. We were supposed to know enough about ploughing, harrowing, carting, and the driving of horses, to make us responsible for the horse work of a farm of 200 acres, of which about 100 acres was arable land or "tillage." Of course, we were under the eagle eye of Dan, the foreman, but as he had fifty beasts to look after and fodder, he could not do more than "set us on" and hope for the best. It was November when we went, and for quite a number of weeks our main job was ploughing. Up till now we had only been doing this kind of work with the other men, and then only when there were horses to spare for us. That meant that we had never really discovered how much we could get through in a day, because what we did not do was always finished by some one else. Now we knew that we were directly responsible for the work being done; there was no one else to pick up the bits, and we had got to know the worst or best of ourselves.

Dan was one of the finest farm foremen that you could ever meet. There was no branch of farm work at which he was not an expert. To see him stacking, thatching, or "setting a rigg" with a plough was an education in itself. He knew good work when he saw it, and he knew a good day's work when he saw it, and what is more, he demanded both from all who worked under him. Boots and I came with a kind of hearsay reputation of having tried our hands at most of the main items of farm work, but Dan was not content with hearsay. He set himself to find out just what we could do.

"What sort o' land is't ut you've ploughed?" he said.

"Oh!" I said, "it's lightish land, a kind of chalky 'soil.'"

"Well," said Dan, "it's on limestone here, so it won't be much different. Have yer done owt on an 'illside?"

"We ploughed a 16-acre field on a steepish hillside," I replied.

Dan grunted. "Can yer tak yer own furrows up?" was the next question.

Yes! we'd done that. Then —"Can yer set yer own riggs?"[1] he demanded, and here we had to confess we couldn't.

"Well," said Dan, "yer'll have to set 'em here—you're t' waggoner" (this to Boots), "and t' waggoner's forced to set 'is own riggs."

The next thing was to "set us on," and see how we framed. I was not a little nervous when the first morning he said, "Gear Sam and Jock for t' plough, and I'll tak' yer up as sean as I've got me brekkust."

Jock hadn't been out for a week, and he was full of beans, and danced about all the way up to the field. Dan helped me to yoke in, and then I started off, and hoped against hope that I shouldn't "have a baulk" straight away. (A baulk, for the benefit of the uninitiated, is when through hitting a stone, or through clumsy handling, your plough jumps clean out of the furrow and skims along the surface. Woe betide you if when this happens you merely try and dive in again a few yards farther on, leaving an untouched piece behind you. It is the hall-mark of the careless slipshod ploughboy, to leave "bits of baulks" all over the field. If you have a "baulk" you must turn your horses and plough round, and come in again behind it, and plough it out.)

As a matter of fact I did not begin with one; and after a few minutes Dan, murmuring something about "It allus made me nervous to have folks watching me," left me and went to his own work. He had seen enough to know that at least the land was going to get "turned over," and he knew that time and practice alone would teach me how to make a really good job.

He came up to the field again once or twice during

[1] Rigg = the first furrow or mark set across an unploughed field.

the day, and made very few comments; but I knew he was taking it all in. As we sat in the kitchen at tea-time I said: "Dan, how much have I ploughed?" "Why," he said, "I should think about half an acre!" Now, I had calculated myself I had ploughed about three-quarters of an acre, and I really think I was not far short of it. However, Dan, as I discovered later, always worked on the principle that "a man's reach must exceed his grasp"—or what's a foreman for? I did not contradict his estimate aloud, but I made a mental resolve that I would try and do a little more the next day.

An acre a day is, of course, the more or less recognised day's work with a single furrow plough and two horses. Conditions of land and weather and short dark days sometimes make it impossible to do this; but in the main it is an average that can be kept up without overdoing your horses or yourself.

VII.—WINTER'S JOBS.

The winter set in early, and the frost was very severe. Some of the younger men said they had never known such a hard winter since they started work, and the older hands said, "There'd bin nowt like it sin' '95." Seven weeks on end we were frost-bound, and nothing could be done in the way of working the land. It is at such times as these that the "plain" jobs arise, and the one saving grace is that some of them keep you warm.

First of all came a long spell of "plugging muck," and it is work that is not the least bit better than it sounds. In plain English it means cleaning out the fold-yards and "scaling" them over the fields. Four "folds" we had, and getting on for fifty tons in each; and well-trampled fold-yard manure does not "help itself" into a cart or out of it. You've got to get down to it with a muck-fork and "rive" it out and swing it up on to the load. There's art in this too, when you come to do it; and you can do twice the work with half the labour when you know how to set about it. I said "rive" just now; but if Dan knew I'd said it, he would say, "That's just what you don't want to do." Often when Boots and I were struggling with an unwieldy lump, he would burst out: "What do you want to go 'riving' and 'tearing' there for? *Yon's* what's fastening it. Get t' top off, and it'll come wiv itself." An optimist indeed; and then under his breath, "By lad, but it's fast!"

So the days went by and the tide in the fold-yards ebbed away, and you said cheerily to your mate: "I'm on t' bottom here," and "How many more loads will take it?" Our horses had a troublous time.

All the tillage fields were up a hill, and it took three horses to pull each load up. The frost had the ground in irons, and there was ice everywhere, and woe betide my little Sam, or any other, if he lost his frost nails from his shoes. At last I came down with my empty cart and met Boots coming up. "You'll get it this time!" she shouted, and soon a little heap on the floor of the yard was "loadened up" and the muck was out. "Let's give a dance," we said; but next morning fresh straw was on the bottom and the beasts were in the yard, and the tide had turned. So the eternal round goes on.

After the muck-loading we turned our attention to mending the farm roads, and the best of one hundred tons of stone were strewn in the ruts and muddy places about the estate, and then running through both these items was the endless undercurrent of work connected with feeding the stock.

"You can go to pull turnips while dinner-time," said Dan when we came out from breakfast in the morning. There was sometimes more in that than meets the eye. I remember days when all the ground was white, and the novice would not have known where to look for turnips at all.

Boots and I only knew because we knew where they had been sown; but we were "old hands" now. We had learnt many little tips for improving a bad situation. At a crisis like this, three bags apiece and some Massey-Harris twine were invaluable. First we planted each foot in the middle of a bag and picked up the ends and tied them round the knees with Massey-Harris—then the third bag served as an apron. Next a couple of bits of Massey-Harris round your wrists to keep the wind out of your sleeves, and looking like nothing less than a South Pole expedition, we sallied forth. The fields were white as a sheet, and not even the tops of the turnips visible sometimes. A hoe was necessary to find them at all, and with it one of us struck into a row and knocked the tops off by following the line of it, and the other came behind and pulled and cleaned the turnips with a knife and drag. It was a slow job at the best, and on mornings with a fog and rime on everything there is very little to be said for it except that the stock must not starve. Even here, though, there was recompense. I shall never forget one morning in early March, as the sun rose red over the snow on the hillsides, and reflected red in the curves of the river below. No sign of spring was abroad, but the trees were a wonderful madder brown. In spite of the snow, I suppose the sap was stirring in their branches, and life was tingling through them with the promise of spring. That's the amazing thing about work on the land—aching fingers with cold, and aching back with stooping, the turnips temporarily mislaid under a deep snow—and yet

the chief memory left in my mind is a red sun rising over snow, and the river winding red, and a certain contentment that the work was done.

VIII.—SPRING SOWING.

At last the frost broke, and we got back to our ploughs. Sowing-time was close upon us, and now it was work indeed. "Gear your horses before brekkust," said Dan—"you maun't be 'angin' about round t' stable after brekkust now—and keep 'em going. You doan't want to be waastin' time turnin' round at furrow ends. Yon field owt to be finished this week, and then we'll get t' 'arrows in tiv it." Even now the weather would not let us have it all our own way. Snow and slush kept hanging about, and the "old hand" knows that time spent ploughing in spring with the land too wet is time worse than lost, because it will not harrow down to a good "seed-bed" without frost to temper it. It taxed Dan's patience and judgment to the utmost to decide when time was being saved by *not* getting on with the work, and when it was possible to catch even an hour or two safely.

At last "yon field" was ploughed, and the weather took a turn, the land dried up, and then it was away with the ploughs and out with the harrows. This was indeed a testing-time. I know Dan was nervous. Up till now it had been a case of going "steady away" and doing a fair average day's work. Now the corn had to be got into the ground as soon as possible, and Boots and I had to "face the music." Poor old Dan didn't want to overdo us, but we were all the material he had, and there was nothing for it but to force the pace as much as he could. After a few days I think he began to realise that it was going to be all right.

The hard frosts of the winter made the land break up quickly, and thanks to our priceless and willing horses, we were harrowing about fourteen acres a day with a pair of harrows each.

Dan came kicking his toes into the ground to see what sort of a seed-bed it was, and grunted satisfaction. "Single it over once more," he said, "and it'll be fit for drilling to-morn."

"To-morn" Boots fetched the drill, and she and Dan fettled it up. The seed corn was dumped in sacks at convenient intervals for filling up the drill. I yoked into some light harrows to follow the drill, and away we started. A corn-drill varies in design and size, and some take a wider "breed" at a time than others. A drill with nine spouts should sow nine acres a day, with thirteen spouts, thirteen acres—that is, one acre a day for each spout. Not so Dan. The

first day (and on a hillside withal) we sowed sixteen acres, and the second day sixteen again. Thirty-two acres in two days; and dog-tired though we were, we were all a little proud of ourselves. The second day my horse, "Jock," distinguished himself by an attack of "colic." The soundest cure, without resorting to medicine, is to walk the horse about; and Boots and I loved him dearly, as we took turns marching him up and down the lane while the other had tea. When one comes in dead to the world it is not a thing one bargains for; but with a good waggoner your horses come before yourself, and we were too proud to hand old "Jock" over to some one else, and eventually he took a turn for the better, and we rolled into bed, too weary to speak perhaps, but satisfied.

The field that was ploughed late did not break up so well, and took a lot of working down. We had to use a Cambridge roller on it several times to make a job of it at all, but eventually it reached a stage when we could do no more, and that too was sown and all the spring corn in the ground. "Shut the gate on it now till harvest," we said. That is not quite *literally* true, because the young corn needs rolling, and then there is hoeing time, or "luking" as we called it; but it is a saying common amongst farm labourers, to signify that the essential fact of a future harvest, as far as it is dependent on them, is assured. Up and down the roads and over the hedges at this time of the year you will hear us call to each other: "Well, 'ave yer gotten all sown?" and the answer, "Ay, we can shut gate on't now!"

IX.—"FETTLING" TURNIP LAND.

There are not a few farmers who have said to their "hands," "I'll give you all a day off when we get 'worked up.'" It is a sage promise as far as the farmer is concerned, as the chances of finding yourselves "worked up," "and nothing doing" on a farm are more than remote. As soon as one job is finished—in fact often before it is finished—another is crying out to be done. Spring corn was in late this year, and close on its heels was the time to drill the wurzels. A 16-acre field was "for wurzels," and we all turned on to "fettle" it. Harrows and rollers careered across the field from morning till night. Then there was salt to fetch, which the labourers sowed by hand from "hoppers" slung on their backs, or sometimes from the rulley as I drove it backwards and forwards across the field.

Then that too was ready to drill, and we all turned to. It is no easy job to lead the horse in a turnip drill, as if it is badly done and you get uneven widths between the rows you will have a very "plain job" later when you come to scruffle them.

Needless to say neither Boots nor I had enough experience to attempt it, when another man was available, so Boots led the first horse and I had the "manishment" waggon in the middle of the field where the drill had to be filled at each "turn about." A cold job on a windy day, with not quite enough to do to warm you up, and no protection from the wind except your horses. I used to cover them up with bags, and then, when I had filled my "skeps" ready for the drill coming up, stand on the leeward side of little Sam and let him be a buttress from the wind.

After the wurzels were in we had a week to ten days back with our ploughs quarting the field that was due "for turnips" at the end of June or early July. Then one dinner-time Dan came in and said: "Wurzels is showing all t' length of t' row. I want you to bring Sam up and see if we can see 'em weel enough to scruffle. He's a very good 'scruffler horse'!" So after dinner Dan and I and Sam sallied forth with a scruffler, having fished it out from where it had been packed away since the previous year, and for the next month I hardly passed a day without it.

X.—CHIEFLY CONCERNING SAM.

So much of a waggoner's work on a farm depends on his horses and the way he drives them. Again, those two conditions depend largely on each other. A horse may be "handy" because he has been driven well, and he is more likely to be well driven if he is handy.

To many young lads with horses every goose is a swan, and if his horse has *any* points in its favour at all, by pride of possession it is to him "such a horse as never was." On the same principle I firmly believed that in Jock and Sam I had as handy an all-round pair of farm horses as were ever yoked to plough or waggon; but I am sure that it was not mere imagination on my part which put my little Sam in a class apart, and made me feel a sort of pity for all the other horsemen. I felt they had really missed something in missing Sam.

He was indeed a favourite all over the estate; every man knew him, be he horseman, labourer, beastman, or shepherd. I never stopped with him anywhere that he did not get a word from them. "And how's Sam this morning?" "Oh, he's all right," I would answer. "Ay, 'e's a right little horse is Sam!" they would repeat.

There was no work on a farm Sam did not know, and no work that he ever shirked. Bad, slipshod, lazy work he could not tolerate. Sometimes I drove him with a young mare "Bell," who was young both in experience and good manners, and Sam's fury when she would not do all that I wanted was a joy to behold.

We harrowed together sometimes, and Bell turned short, and between Sam and myself she found her education being taken in hand. "Whe-arve! Bell," I would sing out, with a flick at the line, and dunt into her neck would go Sam's head, saying as clear as speech: "Can't you *see* what's wanted, my young innocent? Don't you *know* that harrows turn upside down if you turn them short? Do you suppose we harrow a field upside down? and do you suppose your mistress is going to 'tew' herself turning the harrows right way up at every end? Keep your weight on your traces, and turn steady and learn your job from me. Though I say it as shouldn't, I *do* know!" And Sam did know, what's more, and many's the tip he gave me—ploughing, harrowing, carting, scruffling, he was a master worker all through. Little, sturdy, and black, with quick little ears listening for the least word, eyes full of intelligence, and a soft, round, velvety nose that snuffled in your hands and pockets for cake—willing to the point of impatience, and sometimes perhaps a bit "ower keen," little black Sam, it was no wonder you stole the hearts of all, and particularly the one who gained her experience as a "horse lad" with you.

After that day with the scruffler, when Dan set us on, Sam and I went scruffling nearly every day. To know the cleverness of Sam's work it is necessary to explain a little of the art of "scruffling." A scruffler, for the benefit of those who do not know, is a horse-drawn implement for the purpose of cutting out all the rubbish between the rows of young roots. Your horse walks down the middle between the rows, and the scruffler has two knife-like blades running just under the ground and cutting the weeds. These blades are set as wide as you dare without risking cutting into the rows of roots at each side and sweeping them out wholesale.

The younger the roots are the more imperative it is to get close up with your scruffler knives, because later as they grow bigger you will damage them if you cut too close under them.

The difficulty about this in the early stages is that the rows when they are very young are bad to see, and if your horse cannot see them easily he will not keep in the row. Also you can't drive your horse much and steady your scruffler handles at the same time. Now, little Sam could see the rows of wurzels almost better than I could myself; and when I say that where many men are obliged to have a boy to lead the horse to keep him in the row at all, Sam would work all day with me alone, and not even a line to his bit, you will have some idea of what Dan meant by "a good scruffler horse." I know the farm bailiff came walking across one day, and caught Sam and me scruffling without strings, and he said he'd never met any one doing it before, and he was sure it couldn't be done with any horse but Sam!

Sometimes we did have trouble in that wurzel-field—I won't deny. (It was so hot, Sammy, wasn't it? and the flies! Oh, Sammy lad!) Day after day in the blazing sun we toiled up and down, up and down, till we knew every stone in the rows—once over, twice over, three times—and then nearly a fourth. The flies were buzzing in black masses round our heads, and Sam used to wear branches of elder flowers all over his harness wherever I could find a lodging for it; even then sometimes it was more than he could bear, and he used to start off so fast down the rows that it was all I could do to keep pace with him. We would set ourselves so many rows on end, and then a little respite in the shade of a tree. Dan expected us to do four acres a day, or thereabouts; but we couldn't always do it, especially when it had rained and the soil clogged round the knives, and we had continually to stop and clean them. My feet gave way a good deal too, as I was always walking on soft ground, and I think in many ways it was at this job that I longed most ardently for the last turn about, and the moment when I could say to Sam, "It's night, my little lad; we've finished. Are you fit for your tea?" And then I would clamber on to his back, and we would plod down the hill together to the stable. Sam always wanted a huge drink on these occasions, but he was often so hot I couldn't let him have much at first, and he used to look so reproachfully at me, and shake his head and refuse to eat his feed properly. He was a bit of an epicure about his meals, and when, later in the year, he was allowed a wurzel with his tea every night, he never let me forget it. I would take him his corn and chop and then set about rubbing the harness over, and bedding up, intending to put his wurzel in with his last feed. Sam simply couldn't bear it. Clank! bang! and the block on Sam's halter-chain kept shooting up to the ring. I would remain stolidly at my other jobs for a time, but he would not be gainsaid.

Every time I passed he watched me. "Gosh, but you've forgotten again!" he'd say. "Wurzel, please! Thank you for nothing for all this chopped stuff!" Then at last I'd take it in and "rag" him with it behind my back; but he knew too well, and nudged me sharply, as though he would say, "Oh! for goodness sake stop fooling. I *have* worked for it, haven't I?" He used to finish it all in a minute as soon as he got the chance, and you could hear him scrunching it up all over the stable. This chapter is growing long, and for my own pleasure I could so easily make it longer still, but perhaps he will appear again incidentally in connection with other work; and any way I know that Sam himself would be so angry at any publicity arising out of what he would consider was merely doing his job, that I had really better stop.

(To be concluded.)

EXPERIENCES OF A WAR BABY.

BY ONE.

CHAPTER IV.—HARBOUR.

HAVING confessed that the fleet is not always at sea, we must modify that statement a little. Some part of the fleet is always at sea, and every minute of the day and night part of the Allied fleet is patrolling the North Sea, and every other navigable sea. The Hun has but a few hours' steaming before he is in contact with some part of the fleet. Every time he leaves harbour he can be perfectly certain of having a thoroughly good run for his money, while to think of the number of times we have been "over the other side" and not seen so much as a trawler would be nauseating. The object of this chapter is to give some of our ways of passing the time between stunts.

As is right and proper in war time, our days, and sometimes our nights, are devoted to the worship of the great god Gunnery, and of his sister the goddess Torpedo. In the words of the song, we worship "day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year." We are for ever at drills and practices, continually getting more and more efficient, trying new schemes for the destruction of the Boche, adopting and perfecting these schemes. No machinery is ever the worse for being frequently worked, and, Heaven knows, there is enough machinery in the *Penultimate* to keep us busy. Then there are target practices of various kinds to exercise the officers controlling the guns, and reproductions of action conditions, so that they may find ways of overcoming difficulties. Small wonder that it is a common remark from those who have been in action, that they felt as though it was only a practice shoot, until the "target" started returning the compliment.

All these practices, though they should be taken in deadly earnest, have their comic element. It was my luck to be stationed in the "T.S.," or Transmitting Station, which, in addition to its other duties, acts as an exchange for the purposes of abuse. We will suppose that A in the foretop wishes to tell B in No. 4 turret that he is not taking an active enough interest in the affairs of the moment—in other words, that he is adrift. The process is somewhat as follows:—

We in the T.S. hear a whisper, followed at a short interval by a roar. This, to the uninitiated, would convey little. To us, with experience in such matters, it is full of meaning. Three outstanding

facts can be deduced from this simple episode—

(1) That the gunnery lieutenant is in the foretop, and not where some of us would like him to be.

(2) That he has something on his mind, and, furthermore, that he means to ease his mind of that something now, *ec dum.*

(3) That he has called to us, presumably to effect (2), latter part of.

One of our sailors accordingly clicks to attention, advances at the rush to a voice pipe, seizes it smartly in the right hand, and bellows up it, "T.S. foretop." An understanding having thus been established, he applies an ear to the pipe, and by his eager look of expectancy we know that he is receiving the happy news. We are all agog with excitement. What can it be? Is the ship sinking, or are we going to pack up? For a time one could have heard a pin drop. Then the sailor turns to the pipe, and shouts, "Aye, aye, sir." Laying down the voice-pipe with a regretful sigh, he says to the officer of the T.S., "The gunnery lieutenant wants to know what No. 4 turret is doing, sir?" We all sigh in unison to express our sympathy with ourselves for receiving such a very ordinary message after all, and with No. 4 turret for the impending trouble. "Guns" is awkward when roused.

Now the game begins. We get into communication with No. 4 turret, and tell them that the gunnery lieutenant is inquiring after their health, and would like to know why they are not carrying out the exercise. The reply comes back clear and shrill to our telephone operator—

"We 'aven't 'ad no orders to do nothing, and the officer of the turret wants to know why you didn't pass the orders to No. 4 turret."

You will notice that No. 4 has straightway adopted the Service custom, and shifted the blame to some one else. They want to blame us, do they? We shall soon settle that.

We reply in measured tones that we passed the order to carry out an exercise on a house on top of a hill about five minutes ago, and wasn't it about time that they shook up their telephone operator and made him pass orders to the proper quarters instead of keeping them entirely to himself?

They ruminate on this for a bit, and, we hope, tell the 'phone operator a little bit about himself. At any rate, it is a far less jocular voice from No. 4 which presently inquires as to the nature of the object.

We look very patient, and reiterate, "A nouse on top of a nill." This keeps them quiet for a couple of minutes, but presently there comes another bleat from No. 4. Our 'phone man, having taken it in, shakes his head wearily, and says to the officer of the T.S.—

"No. 4 says they cannot see the object, sir. The officer of the turret would like a more detailed description of it, and

would also like to know which way it is going."

This latter part somewhat baffles us. We think for a possible solution of the mystery, but it eludes us. We can only tell the officer of No. 4 that the house is a very prominent one, very ordinary to look at, and, since we had had no orders to the contrary, we believed it to be stationary.

"What's that object you said?" says No. 4.

"A prominent 'ouse on top of a nill," we wearily respond.

"A nouse," says No. 4; "why the—why can't you speak more plainly. I thought you said a norse."

After that we get peace. We report to the gunnery lieutenant that No. 4 turret apparently first failed to get the order, and then trained on the wrong object.

"Um," says the gunnery jack, in a way which bodes ill for No. 4 when this picnic is over.

Another exercise which frequently provides amusement, and sometimes a little excitement, is one in which the midshipmen are put on to control the guns during a practice shoot. It is a very necessary part of our education that we should gain practical knowledge of the dangers and difficulties which beset a gun-control officer and spotter. However, as can be imagined, the unexpected can, and sometimes does, happen on these occasions. There was one case in which a midshipman was controlling some guns firing at a target towed by a tug. Something went wrong with the works, and, instead of annihilating the target, the projectiles were whistling over the tug, and throwing up great fountains as they pitched beyond her. The skipper of the tug stood it for a bit like a hero, but as things seemed to be getting no better, his feelings got the better of him.

"If you care to come down four hundred yards," he signalled, "you will sink me."

That incident brings up the subject of towing targets, which to many of us is a somewhat painful subject. I took part in one which, in particular, remains in my mind. It was a sad business.

One evening in mid-winter a messenger came into the gun-room and told me that the gunnery lieutenant wished to speak to me. This news never betided much good, so I girded up my loins and took myself along to his office, all prepared for a strafe. On arrival, I found the place already pretty full of officers and men, from which it was evident that it was not to be a *pas seul*. Having gathered us all together, the G. L. addressed us as follows:—

"The fourth battle squadron is doing a shoot to-morrow, a long-range affair, and we have been told off to mark for them. You will compose the marking party. Your duties will be as follows," &c., &c. Details followed, the address ending up, "Right; be ready to leave the ship at 4 A.M. sharp, taking breakfasts, lunches, and teas. With luck you may be back by 7 or 8 P.M.

That is all." All on five bob a day!

At 3.30 A.M. I was called, and having got outside a large cup of cocoa, I wrapped myself up in innumerable coats, sweaters, and mufflers, and boarded the tug in company with the rest of the party. At 4 A.M. we cast off and proceeded seawards.

That tug had few advantages and many disadvantages to offer. With a large target in tow our progress was very slow, hardly more than a decent running pace, whilst the distance to the practice area was considerable. There was hardly any shelter at all, and at 4 A.M. on a winter's morning in these parts the temperature is not great enough to boast about. For two hours we proceeded seawards, wind and sea rising steadily meanwhile. Our older and more experienced officers began to shake their heads, and say that the practice could not be carried out, as the sea would be too bad for the target. They grew more and more dismal, and, sure enough, a little later we got a wireless signal, which ran—

"Weather reported too bad for firing. Practice postponed. Tug and target return to harbour."

Good news for us, you will say, to avoid getting knocked about by heavy weather outside. You do not know the good old Service. We knew that we should have to repeat this performance on the morrow, and the next day, and the day after, until a suitable day arrived and the practice came off. Still, it was no use swearing at the inevitable. To drown our sorrows we pulled out the food, which should have served us for breakfast, lunch, and tea, and at 7 A.M. partook of a hearty meal of sandwiches and bottled beer. At 10 o'clock, somewhat bedraggled, we got back to the ship.

I will not weary you with a repetition of this scene. We had two more false starts on the two succeeding days, and were getting pretty well fed up with the show. The weather is never good at this time of year, and is frequently very bad for days at a stretch. Eventually, however, we got a day which suited. There was not too much sea running to make towing an impossibility, and, as we only parted the towing wire once during the trip out, we really did fairly well. For all that there was a considerable swell running. Before we started the skipper of the tug cheered us by saying that the last time he did this game the tug did everything but upset. Certainly she rolled like a thing possessed, and considerably upset our peace of mind. I got as far as measuring the distance to the ship's side, when the fit passed, and I felt all right again.

About 11 A.M. some ships came in sight, which we recognised as forming part of the fourth battle squadron. They were just little shapes and smudges of smoke when we first saw them, and not much larger when they turned into line on nearly the same course as ourselves, for the firing. We

all closed up at our positions for observing and recording, and waited. Our look-outs had their eyes glued on the firing ships, and presently came a hail, "Leading ship fired, sir." A silence fell over the party as we stood by. Then followed a pause, which was so long that people began to look about and wonder whether the salvo had got lost in the post. Then there came a whistle ending in a crash, and four great fountains sprang into the air astern.

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sions," or parade. Midshipmen are attached to divisions of seamen, and act as labour savers and N.C.O.'s to the officers in charge. Then for a brief time we try to imitate the army and drill. There is much barking of orders, saluting, and inspecting to be carried out. Everybody reports some one present to every one else. The imitation of the army is a poor one, as a sailor on board ship feels distinctly aggrieved when expected to march smartly and drill with precision. There is always the feeling in mind that "'e didn't join the navy to be an asterisk bullock." Ashore he feels that it is up to him to impress the mere civilian with the fact that he is a handy man, and can do anything that is asked of him. Nevertheless divisions is a popular institution with the commander as a means of putting a little life into us before the real work of the day commences. We heartily dislike the process.

After performing our duties as assistant officers of divisions, we midshipmen relapse into schoolboys. We are herded into space surrounded by a canvas screen and filled with desks, which is called the "study." Here, under a naval instructor, who is an exact reproduction of the master at school, we do sums. They are just pure "maths," but, to add a nautical touch, we call them navigation. Thus we pass a happy forenoon determining the position of some unknown ship which in a weak moment felt that she simply must find the altitude of the sun. In the afternoon we divide into sections, some of us worshipping in each of the other departments.

At 3.30 P.M. we usually finish work for the day, and at four o'clock, by way of celebration, we "go to quarters." This is a somewhat reduced form of divisions, and is just as popular. With it our official day ends. The dog-watches which follow are, by tradition, our own time—to spend as we like. In fine weather, and in civilised ports, we land for golf or other forms of amusement. In our usual port of call we remain on board, and take some kind of exercise to keep in condition. The most popular game is known as deck hockey. The game is supposed to be founded on the ordinary game of hockey, though the resemblance is not striking. The ball is a rope grummet, or a small block of wood, and the weapons of attack are walking-sticks. There are no generally accepted rules, and the resultant games are never dull. One seldom emerges from a game with much skin on one's feet. Then we have the Sandow specialists, the skipping enthusiasts, and the runners. The latter class is not large, and consists chiefly of individuals who are trying to earn five pints of beer by running a hundred times round the quarter-deck in thirty minutes.

To ensure that our spare time is not entirely wasted, there is always a midshipman of the watch during non-instructional hours. In theory he is supposed to trot round behind the officer of the watch

and gaze in awe at that officer's wonderful powers of organisation. In practice his duties are a trifle more varied. In almost any standard work on the duties of an officer of the watch you will find it stated that, suitably trained, the midshipman of the watch can take on most of the officer of the watch's duties. This idea has received the unanimous support of the officer of the watch clan, and in consequence the midshipman of the watch can frequently be found ruling the quarter-deck with great success. The officer of the watch is to be found in a place of greater comfort, though always on the alert for such a contingency as the unexpected arrival of an admiral alongside.

After dinner we are frequently given lectures on service subjects, to supplement our ordinary instruction. Otherwise we are free to do as we like again. Then there is often a sing-song and a ragtime dance, for which the younger and more cheerful inhabitants of the ward-room come in. After dancing till we are half dead, the choir forms up and proclaims to all and sundry that the first love is the best love, whether the world keeps turning or not. It doesn't matter much what we sing, so long as there is plenty of opportunity for making a noise. When proceedings are at their height, a ship's corporal puts his head in at the door and reports "Ten o'clock, sir, please." This is the signal for the end. The party breaks up, and the end of another day has been reached.

The predominant feature of our life under war conditions is boredom. Those people who have been privileged to visit the army and the navy in some capacity, and have impartially looked at the conditions under which each Service works, must have concluded that the navy has a "soft number." Here are we, miles from any enemy guns, as safe as at home, with a dry bed every night and regular meals. In many respects we are carrying on as though there was no war. Contrast this with the army. They have to exist in mud and water-logged trenches, their food supply only possible by braving the shells of the enemy. When in the trenches they are always being fired at, gassed, and otherwise harassed. They are never out of action. If they are hit they may lie for days before it is possible to attend to them. If we are hurt we have a sick bay and every convenience within 200 yards. Yet the army has one advantage. They can feel that at least they are engaged in beating the Boche. It is very hard for us to realise that we are taking part in the war at all. It is even harder to realise that if it were not for the fleet, the war would result in a German victory. All that we do realise is that we are situated in a remote place doing the same thing day after day for eleven and a half months out of twelve. We feel it sickening who have been at it for a short time. How do those feel who have been in the northern mists since August 1914?

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entertaining to watch. By far the most successful ground is one where the builders felt languid, and, instead of pulling up the heather just cut it short, planted the goal-posts, and finished. The roots make no bed of roses for those who fall, and, as a result of this, few leave the ground intact, but the ground is seldom unplayable.

Thus we can get games of football and golf (no one has been brave enough to suggest a cricket pitch). The golf links is at the moment supposed to be the worst in civilised or semi-civilised lands, but years of ceaseless toil will doubtless make it a rival to St Andrews or North Berwick. This tribute to the grand fleet's work during the great war will be well worth a Cook's tour in fifty years' time.

We occasionally shift our anchorage to a place known to the initiated as the "North Shore." This spot, though hardly attractive-looking, is far superior to our usual place of residence. There is plenty of land of the ordinary kind—rocky hills, heather-covered moors, lochs and burns. Plenty of good walks can be had, and there are endless places for picnics in summer-time. There is fishing to be had for the asking, though it cannot be said that the anglers return laden. Along the coast runs a real road, and on it can sometimes be seen real Ford cars. They appear to be the original design of car, and spend their declining years in knocking about the very third-class road at a reckless speed of ten miles an hour. For all that, the sight of such modern innovations is a cheering one.

There is even a town in this neighbourhood with a number of modern conveniences. People sometimes put on fine clothing and go there to see streets and people again, make purchases, and even go to the pictures. The city is not abounding in attractions, and few people go there twice.

To counteract the effect of all this delirious gaiety, there is the usual catch. In this case, the gunnery people feel it incumbent upon them to indulge in a form of small-gun practice which is impossible at the usual anchorage. Of course it takes place when we should be free to go ashore, and so we are not able to overdo the shore-going. For all this the North Shore is a popular resort.

On far rarer occasions we pay a visit to a really civilised part of the world, and then there is a general exodus of all whose duties permit of landing. It is hard for an ordinary person to imagine the amount of pleasure that can be derived from the sight of a tree when one has not seen anything higher than a bush for months. I never noticed trees before I went to sea, but now every tree is a joy. Then there is the hum of shore life, the smoke of towns and villages, and the smells of the same. One can almost welcome a tannery smell! In fact, arriving in civilised parts after a sojourn in the mists is almost as sentimental an affair as the return of an arctic expedition, or something of that sort.

Now at about midday on make-and-mend days the gun-room becomes quite agitated. We come in from work with a rush, and a cry goes up for the leave book. The keeper of the book is our assistant clerk, a young and green product of a large public school who lately joined, and of course is nowhere to be found.

"Where is that asterisk chick?"

"Where has that ullage stowed himself?" come from all of us.

Things are getting fairly serious, as the commander has decreed that the book must reach him properly made up and signed by every other individual of a long list of heads of departments before he attaches his signature, and that the book must reach him before noon. The penalty is a general stoppage of leave. The time is now 11.45.

A combined search unearths the clerk in the bathroom, from whence he is extracted and hustled to the mess to do his job.

Amidst a chorus of "Don't you forget me or I'll wring your neck" from senior midshipmen, and a continuous stream of remarks from the junior, a list is compiled and submitted to the senior midshipman. He adds a list of the signatures of approval to be obtained, and then roars—

"Duty snottie, take the book round, show it to Guns, Torps, N.I., Senior Engineer, Nanny, and the Bloke, and buck up for heaven's sake, you've only got ten minutes."

Away goes the small boy, and we wait in patience, hoping for the best. After about ten minutes he reappears, flings down his cap, and surveys the expectant company with a soothing expression.

"You're all O.K. except Tinietot," he announces; "his leave is stopped."

"Who's the dirty hound who's jambed my leave?" comes fortissimo from that unfortunate gentleman.

"It was nurse. He said that he didn't know what the present-day midshipman was coming to. Under the old scheme, when he was a snottie, you were lucky to see the beach once in three months; whereas here was a list a page long, and a list like that was the regular thing. Anyway, he was not going to let that young fool, Tinietot, ashore. He was a disgrace to the Service, and a young officer who was unable to bring a picket-boat alongside in his day had his leave stopped for three years, and spent them in the foretop. The old fool nearly made me late for the Bloke."

"You'd think I was the only asterisk snottie who ever went bow on into a gangway," moans Tinietot; but seeing that his audience is unsympathetic, he drowns his sorrows in beer.

Lunch over, the rest of us make tracks for the chest flat to shift. As usual there is trouble over clothes. No one seems to have got any clothes, and every one seems to have selected you from whom to borrow. You are bombarded with demands for collars,

shirts, and ties. You yourself are endeavouring to obtain a pair of socks, a handkerchief, and a mackintosh, and cannot be bothered with the worries of other people. Thus the merry game continues until a ring on the boat-gong warns us that the boat will shortly be alongside. Each person completes his complement of clothes in some miraculous fashion, and an exodus is made on deck. We file down into the waiting picket-boat and take our places on the roof of the cabin. Following us come our seniors, who fill the cabin and stern-sheets, and when the last brass hat has got in the order is given to "carry on." Followed by the slow sad smiles of those who have been unfortunate enough to be kept on board, we push off, and after clearing the ship proceed at a funeral pace towards a far-distant pier. For a space we look patient and hope that the tide will turn, but as it shows no signs of doing so and we are hardly gaining any ground, there come fevered exhortations from the stern-sheets to "whack her up a bit." These demands are forwarded to the stoker petty officer, who is in charge of the engines, by the coxswain, eliciting a reply that "The stoker P.O. says 'e ain't got no steam pressure, sir, but 'e'll try."

Then follows a short time while he tries, and then the speed suddenly increases. Simultaneously a dense cloud of smoke and a shower of coal dust pours forth from the funnel, and from then till the end of the voyage we sit in a profane mass whilst coal dust gets down our necks and red-hot cinders hit all the portions of our bodies which are open to attack. We can hardly complain, for we all asked for more speed, and to keep up such a high speed requires vigorous stoking. At long-last the pier is reached, and after shaking off as much coal as possible, we depart to our destinations.

Such leave is a very short affair, and in a few hours we are all gathered at the pier once more. A string of boats lying abreast stretches far out, and across these we make our way, for, as usual, our boat has contrived to come in late and get the outside billet. Amid much blowing of syrens and ringing of bells each boat gets her complement of officers and departs. We eventually complete, and after going astern full speed twice to avoid other boats who have tried to cut across our bows and end their careers, we get clear away. At first a contented silence broods over the boat. This day, for the first time for months, we have conversed with beings who could not tell the difference between a cruiser and a destroyer, and whose sole topic of conversation is not the eternal shop. The memory is still fresh.

Somebody wakes up after a bit and gives tongue.

"Anybody got an evening paper? Have we won the war, or anything?"

He is appeased with the local rag, but some one else starts an argument on the question of who is governing Russia. The peace is disturbed. Once

more we are the Navy at sea.

The rarest variety of leave, and by far the best, is that known as "long leave." The name is derived not so much from its length but from the fact that it comes all together, and that for its duration you are really living ashore, and are not just spending a little time between boats. In war time we rarely get more than ten days' leave in the year, which makes the leave when it comes a great event. It is worked up to and looked back on for about half the year, and is exactly like the going home for the holidays which in days of peace we should still be enjoying.

Some months before the event the buzz is started. Somebody hears some one say to some one else that they heard the commander talking about a refit. This rumour is further strengthened by the midshipman of the afternoon watch overhearing the engineer commander say to the senior that he proposed having the stern gland packed when we next refitted. This very non-committal remark is turned and twisted until a few days later it appears that we are going to have a long refit very shortly, as the stern gland has fallen out.

Weeks pass and idle rumours continue to float about. Each theory as to the time of the refit is accompanied by dates, and the dates are invariably vouched for by some high authority who "ought to know." The "authorities" have probably as little idea of the definite date as we, for in time of war fate plays the greatest part in the decision of dates. Still, any innocent remark or supposition by an officer wearing a brass hat provides a buzz for circulation throughout the ship. Should the game show any signs of flagging, our humorists invent a buzz of their own, and circulate it as the statement of some eminent officer whose exalted position makes a personal inquiry impracticable.

Slowly the dates come closer and more definite news is obtained. There are many really infallible signs of the near approach of a refit. An enormous amount of paper work comes to the share of the captain's office. The captain's clerk is a member of the mess, and though terribly discreet in the news imparted to us outsiders, his mere manner tells a tale. Then one fine day the admiral expresses a wish to see the captain, and when he comes back his usually austere countenance wears a smile of content. He walks up and down the quarter-deck with the commander for some time discussing unwarlike subjects, and they smile at each other. In two minutes the news is all over the ship. We have received our orders to refit.

That this is a fact comes the proof in the afternoon in the form of a signal from the admiral. It reads: "*Penultimate*, raise steam and proceed in accordance with previous orders." That evening we weigh and proceed out of

harbour, watched by the envious eyes of the other luckless ships. As we pass our squadron we receive signals wishing us "good luck and a pleasant leave," to which we joyfully reply: "The same to you when your turn comes."

On clearing harbour we push our nose into a regular snorter. A south-easterly gale is blowing, and the temperature is dropping below freezing-point as night comes down. We wallow about with a nasty corkscrew motion, of which the *Penultimate* is very fond. It appears when you are forward that the ship is pitching, whereas if you go aft you will think that she is only rolling hard. Thus we wallow about with clouds of spray flying over the decks, and the forecastle almost continuously awash. The casemates in which the secondary armament is situated become flooded, and the crews have their time on watch filled by baling. In one casemate the drains become choked, and the crew have to abandon the place, whereupon the water leaks into the battery, and we have a foot of water swishing about as the ship lurches. All fan inlets and exhausts have been closed to prevent the ingress of water, and the air below decks is thick and nasty. Who cares two pins? It only makes the leave seem pleasanter when it comes.

After a night of this pleasantry we enter the dockyard port in the early hours and make fast to a buoy in mid-stream. All forenoon we are hard at work, every one of us, in lightening the ship and preparing her for docking. There can be no cessation of work now, for the docking programme has begun, and unless we are in dock by a stated time people will want to know the reason why. As we finish our preparations the tugs come out from the dockyard and surround us. We slip from the buoy and are soon proceeding at a slow and majestic speed towards the dockyard, towed by two tugs, whilst others fuss around giving a pull here and a push there to ensure that we go in straight. The control of the ship is no longer in the hands of the captain, but a King's Harbour-master armed with a large megaphone is now in command.

Taking our ease after a well-earned lunch, we see through the gun-room scuttles that we are gliding past a stone quay decorated with a number of our old friends the dockyard maties. The skilled gentlemen are at their ease for the present, waiting till we are safely in dock, when they will start straight away on our refit. The unskilled are split up into gangs and are behaving, to the casual observer, in an aimless manner. Each gang has got a wire with an end made fast to the ship. The other end they take to a convenient bollard and take a turn round it. They wait till a strain comes on the wire, when they make a very spiritless attempt to overcome it. A very short pull persuading them that resistance is useless, they take off the turns, amble along to

the next bollard and repeat the process. The whole movements of these gangs seem too desultory to have any effect, and yet by this means we are warped into dock in a surprisingly short space of time.

By this time we are all below packing as a preparation to departure. Tin cases are filled, hauled up on deck by ourselves and our servants, and piled on to a cart for transport to the station. Then we shift into fine clothing, report to the Commander for "permission to proceed on long leave," collect endless papers to give us free tickets, food coupons, &c., and away we go. The water-level in the dock is already falling, dockyard maties are streaming on board, braziers are being set up on the upper deck, and small rivet boys have started their endless games with red-hot rivets. To us these facts have little meaning. For ten days we have finished with the war.

It is in this sensation that the war no longer concerns us, that the greatest pleasure of long leave lies. Whilst we are on short leave there is always the sensation of being tethered at the end of a piece of string. We are always subject to instant recall, and all our movements must be regulated by this fact. We may not be out of reach of a telephone for more than an hour. We may not go farther than a certain short distance from our landing-place for the same reason. In every way we are tied down.

Now we are free to go where we like and do what we like as long as our money lasts. Nobody will stop us. Of course, if there happens to be an action during this time we shall almost certainly miss it. To counteract this we shall miss all the "flaps," all the sudden rushes to sea which make life a burden. It gives great peace of mind to think that we are right out of the war, and as safe and untroubled as the "Conchies" at Dartmoor.

The ten days pass all too quickly, and before we know where we are we are once more aboard the special train on the return journey. The noise of conversation drowns that of the train. Everybody is going over his leave, day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute. All the shows in town are discussed seriatim, and votes of approval passed on them all. Choruses are sung, choruses (the human kind) are discussed. The young officer who has spent his leave in a successful campaign, and proposes shortly to join the married men, has his leg pulled with vigour. The journey is quickly passed and the dockyard reached. Having mustered our gear we proceed to the ship.

What a horrible sight meets our eyes. We left the *Penultimate* a smart clean ship, and the pride of the fleet; look at her now! The beautiful paintwork is chipped and filthy. The decks are covered in a layer of mud trodden in by the hobnailed boots of thousands of highly-paid workmen. Everywhere there is a litter of old rivets, wood shavings, dust and dirt of all kinds. The ship echoes throughout with the

clanging of hammers, the rattle and hissing of pneumatic drills. Half an hour in the ship makes your head ache, an hour is nearly enough to send you mad. We have only come in for the tail-end, as the refit is practically over, but that evening is enough for us. As many as possible depart on short leave as soon as they have stowed their gear. We who cannot get leave turn in, feeling that it will take a week of make-and-mends to clear our heads. It will certainly take a week of "Saturday Routine," a routine which includes much extra scrubbing of decks, to get the ship even passable.

In passing it may be mentioned that, with a war going on, we cannot devote nearly as much time to the cleanliness of the ship as is the case in peace time. The gunnery and torpedo people must have first turn with the hands, before cleaning ship can take place. However, a good degree of cleanliness is necessary to keep healthy, and, with old traditions, what a commander would call filthy many people would think spotless. Small wonder that it is now unsafe to venture within ten yards of the Bloke.

The next morning when we turn out we find the dock flooding and preparations are in progress for our departure. Out in the stream we see the ship which is to take our place in dock for her refit. She came in early in the morning, and is now waiting for us to come out. To think that this afternoon her ship's company will be departing by the same special train is to feel unduly jealous. We cheer ourselves up in different ways. A party of sailors are over the side painting out the scars, and have got rather a growl. The petty officer in charge overhears them, and leaning over the side, with deep sarcasm in his voice he says—

"What the —— 'ave you got a bleat about anyway? In a year's time you'll be going back for another ten days' leaf."

At ten o'clock the ship is cleared of maties, and the retire is sounded on bugles as a sign for any of our men ashore to get on board. The gangs of the unwashed arrive with their wires. Tugs are already fussing about astern, and slowly we start to glide out. From the dock we pass into the basin, and from the basin into the river, when the tugs are cast off, and we proceed under our own steam to a buoy. When made fast there we proceed to the uncongenial task of re-embarking all the gear of which we rid ourselves before docking. The re-embarkation takes much longer, and it is evening before we are finished. That night we sail to rejoin the fleet, and the tale of work is taken up where we left it.

(To be continued.)

THE RETURN PUSH.

BY QUEX.

V.

On the evening of August 3, an evening with a sinister lowering sky, we settled in our newest Headquarters: wooden huts, perched on the long steep slope of a quarry just outside the crumbling ruins of a little town celebrated in the war annals of 1916 for an officers' tea-rooms, where two pretty daughters of the house acted as waitresses.

Excitement was in the air. Marshal Foch's bold strategy at Soissons had had dramatic effect. The initiative was passing again to the Allies. A faint rumour had developed into an official fact. There was to be a big attack on our immediate front. Yet few of us dared to conceive the mark in history that August 8 was to make. All we really hoped for was a series of stout resolute operations that would bring Germany's great offensive to a deadlock.

Along the road that wound past the quarry — offshoot of a main route that will for ever be associated with the War — there flowed a ceaseless stream of ammunition waggons. "This goes on for three nights. . . . My Gad, they're getting something ready for him," remarked our new adjutant to me. Gallant, red-faced, roaring old Castle had been transferred to command the Small Arms Ammunition section of the D.A.C., where his love of horses had full play, and had already gained his section many prizes at our Horse Show a week ago.

Rain descended in stinging torrents, and the Australian colonel and his adjutant, who would leave as soon as they heard that our batteries had relieved theirs, looked out disgustedly. I called for a bottle of whisky, and when the Australian adjutant toasted me with "Here's to the skin of your nose," I gathered that his gloom was lessening. The soup came in and we started dinner.

Talk ran upon the extraordinary precautions taken to effect a surprise upon the enemy. Field-guns were not to be moved up to their battle positions until the night before the attack. There was to be no digging in of guns, no earth was to be upturned. Reconnaissance likely to come under enemy observation was to be carried out with a minimum of movement. As few officers and men as was possible were to be made aware of the date and the scope of the operation. On a still night the creaking rattle of ammunition waggons on the move may be heard a very long way off. To prevent this noise of movement wheel tyres were being lapped with

rope, and the play of the wheels muffled by the use of leather washers. Straw had even to be laid on some of the roads—as straw is laid in front of houses where the seriously sick are lying.

"I think," said the Australian signalling officer, "that the funniest thing is the suggestion in orders that telephone conversations should be camouflaged. I suppose that if some indiscreet individual asks over the 'phone whether, for instance, a new telephone line has been laid to a certain map point, it is advisable to reply, 'No, he's dining out to-night.'"

"Why not try a whistling code?" put in our adjutant. "Suppose you whistled the first line of 'Where my Caravan has rested,' that could mean 'at the waggon line.'"

"And 'Tell me the old, old Story' would be 'Send in your ammunition returns at once,'" laughed Wilde, our signalling officer, who had been angered many times because his line to Divisional Artillery had been held up for that purpose.

"And 'It's a long way to Tipperary' could be taken as 'Lengthen your Range,'" said one of the Australian officers in his soft drawl; while the exuberance reached its climax when some one suggested that "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee" might be whistled to indicate that the Divisional Commander was expected at any moment.

"You've had some of the Americans with you, haven't you?" asked our colonel of the Australian colonel. "How do you find them? We heard a humorous report that some of the Australian infantry were rather startled by their bloodthirstiness and the vigour of their language."

The Australian colonel—one of those big, ugly, good-tempered men who attract friendship—laughed and replied, "I did hear one good story. A slightly wounded Boche was being carried on a stretcher to the dressing station by an American and one of our men. The Boche spoke a bit of English, and was talkative. 'English no good,' he said. 'French no good, Americans no good.' The stretcher-bearers walked on without answering. The Boche began again. 'The English think they're going to win the war,—they're wrong. You Americans think you've come to win,—you're wrong.'

"Then the American spoke for the first and last time. 'You think you're going to be carried to hospital,—you're wrong. Put him down, Digger!' And that ended that.

"Speaking seriously, though," he went on, "the Americans who have been attached to us are good stuff—keen to learn, and the right age and stamp. When they pick up more old-soldier cunning they'll be mighty good."

"From all we hear, you fellows will teach them that," answered our colonel. "I'm told that your infantry do practically what they like with the Boche on their sector over the river. What was that story a Corps officer told me

the other day? Oh, I know! They say your infantry send out patrols each day to find out how the Boche is getting on with his new trenches. When he has dug well down and is making himself comfortable, one of the patrol party reports. 'I think it's deep enough now, sir'; and there is a raid, and the Australians make themselves at home in the trench the Boche has sweated to make."

The Australian colonel nodded with pleasure. "Yes, our lot are pretty good at the cuckoo game," he agreed.

Next morning our shaving operations were enlivened by the swift rush of three high-velocity shells that seemed to singe the roof of the hut I was in. They scattered mud, and made holes in the road below. "The nasty fellow!" ejaculated our new American doctor, hastening outside, with the active curiosity of the new arrival who has been little under shell fire, to see where the shells had burst. Our little Philadelphia medico had gone, a week before, to join the American forces. His successor was broad-built, choleric, but kind of heart, and came from Ohio. I suspected the new doctor of a sense of humour, as well as of an understanding of current smart-set satire. "They kept me at your base two months," he told me, "but I wanted to see the war. I also heard an English doctor say he would be glad of a move, as the base was full of P.U.O. and O.B.E.'s."

After breakfast the colonel and myself passed through the battered relics of the town on our way to the batteries. The rain and the tremendous traffic of the previous night had churned the streets into slush, but the feeling that we were on the eve of great events made me look more towards things of cheer. The sign-board, "—th Division Rest House," on a tumble-down dwelling ringed round with shell-holes, seemed over-optimistic, but the intention was good. At the little railway station a couple of straw-stuffed dummies, side by side on a platform seat, as if waiting for a train, showed that a waggish spirit was abroad. One figure was made up with a black swallow-tailed coat, blue trousers, and a bowler hat set at a jaunty angle; the other with a woman's summer skirt and blouse and an open parasol. A Battery, who had discovered excellent dug-outs in the railway cutting, reported that their only trouble was the flies, which were illimitable. B and C had their own particular note of satisfaction. They were sharing a row of dug-outs equipped with German wire beds, tables, mirrors, and other home comforts. "We adopted the Solomon method of division," explained Major Bullivant. "I picked out two lots of quarters, and then gave C first choice."

"We've got to select positions still farther forward for the batteries to move to if the attack proves a success," said the colonel next day; and on this morning's outing we

walked a long way up to the infantry outposts. We struck a hard main road that led due east across a wide unwooded stretch of country. A drizzling rain had set in; a few big shells grunted and wheezed high over our heads; at intervals we passed litters of dead horses, rotting and stinking, and blown up like balloons. At a cross-road we came to a quarry where a number of sappers were working. The captain in charge smiled when the colonel asked what was the task in hand. "General —— hopes it will become his headquarters three hours after zero hour, sir."

"That ammunition's well hidden," remarked the colonel as we followed a lane to the right, and noted some neat heaps of 18-pdr. shells tucked under a hedge. We found other small dumps of ammunition hidden among the corn, and stowed in roadside recesses. Studying his map, the colonel led the way across some disused trenches, past a lonely burial-place, horribly torn and bespattered by shell fire, and up a wide desolate rise. "This will do very well," said the colonel, marking his map. He looked up at the grey sky and the heavy drifting clouds, and added, "We'll be getting back."

We came back along the main road, meeting small occasional parties of infantry, and turned to the right down a road that led to the nearest village. A Boche 5·9 was firing. The shells fell at minute intervals four hundred yards beyond the road on which we were walking. The colonel was describing to me some of the enjoyments of peace soldiering in India, when a violent rushing of air, and a vicious crack, and a shower of earth descended upon us; and dust hung in the air like a giant shroud. A shell had fallen on the road forty yards in front of us.

We had both ducked; the colonel looked up and asked, "Well, do we continue?"

"We might get off the road and go round in a semicircle, sir," I volunteered. "I think it would be safer moving towards the gun than away from it."

"No, I think that was a round badly 'layed,'" responded the colonel. "We'll keep on the road. Besides, we shall have time to get past before the next one comes. But I give you warning," he added with a twinkle, "the next one that comes so near I lie down flat."

"I shall do exactly as you do, sir," I responded in the same spirit.

The colonel was right as usual. The next round went well over the road again, and we walked along comfortably. At the entrance to the village lay two horses, freshly killed. The harness had not been removed. The colonel called to two R.A.M.C. men standing near. "Remove those saddles and the harness," he said, "and place them where they can be salvaged. It will mean cutting the girths when the horses commence to swell."

At 4.30 next morning the batteries were roused to answer an S.O.S. call. The rumble of guns along the whole of our Divisional front lasted for two hours. By lunch-time we learned that strong Hun forces had got into our trenches and penetrated as far as the quarry, where the colonel and myself had seen the sappers at work. Twenty sappers and their officer had been caught below ground, in what had been destined to become General ——'s Headquarters. Our counter-attack had won back only part of the lost ground.

"I'm afraid they'll spot all that ammunition. They are almost certain now to know that something's afoot," said the colonel thoughtfully.

"Something like this always does happen when we arrange anything," broke in the adjutant gloomily.

There were blank faces that day. We waited to hear whether there would be a change of plan. But after dark the ammunition waggons again poured ceaselessly along the roads that led to the front.

VI.

On the afternoon of August 7 the colonel left us to assume command of the Divisional Artillery, the C.R.A. having fallen ill and the senior colonel being on leave. Major Veasey, a Territorial officer, who was senior to our two regular battery commanders, a sound soldier and a well-liked man, had come over from D Battery to command the brigade. A determined counter-attack, carried out by one of our Divisional infantry brigades, had won back most of the ground lost to the Boche the day before. Operation orders for the big attack on the morning of the 8th had been circulated to the batteries, and between 9 P.M. and 10 P.M. the guns were to move up to the battle positions. The old wheeler was looking ruefully at the ninety-two steps leading from the quarry up to our mess, made of wooden pegs and sides of ammunition boxes, that it had taken him three days to complete. "My gosh! that does seem a waste of labour," commented the American doctor, with a slow smile.

"Doctor, those steps will be a godsend to the next people who come to live here," I explained. "That's one of the ways in which life is made possible out here."

We dined at eight, and it was arranged that Major Veasey, the adjutant, and the signalling officer should go on ahead, leaving me to keep in telephone touch with batteries and Divisional Artillery until communications were complete at the new Headquarters.

Down below the regimental sergeant-major was loading up the G.S. waggon and the Maltese cart. An ejaculation from Wilde, the signalling officer, caused every one to stare through the mess door. "Why,

they're putting a bed on, . . . and look at the size of it. . . . Hi! you can't take that," he called out to the party below.

The doctor rose from his seat and looked down. "Why, that's *my* bed," he said.

"But, doctor, you can't take a thing like that," interposed the adjutant.

The doctor's face flushed. This being his baptismal experience of the Front, he regarded the broad wire bed he had found in his hut as a prize; he was unaware that in this part of the world similar beds could be counted in hundreds.

"But I like that bed. I can sleep on it. I want it, and mean to have it," he went on warmly.

"Sorry, doctor," answered the adjutant firmly. "Our carts have as much as they can carry already."

The doctor seemed disposed to have the matter out; but Major Veasey, who had been regarding him fixedly, and looked amused, stopped further argument by saying, "Don't worry, doctor. There are plenty of beds at the new position."

The doctor sat down silent but troubled; and when the others went he said he would stay behind with me. I think he wanted my sympathy, but the telephone kept me so busy —messages that certain batteries had started to move, demands from the staff captain for a final return showing the shortage of gas-shell gauntlets, and for lists of area stores that we expected to hand over, and a request from the adjutant to bring the barometer that he had overlooked —that there was little time for talk.

It was half-past ten when word having come that full communication had been established at the new position, I told the two signallers who had remained with me to disconnect the wires; and the doctor and I set off. It was a murky night, and the air was warmly moist. The familiar rumble of guns doing night-firing sounded all along the Front; enemy shells were falling in the village towards which we were walking. There was a short cut across the river and the railway and then on through corn-fields. To strike it we should have to pass through a particular skeleton house in the village we were leaving, out by the back garden, and thence along a narrow track that led across a swamp. In the dark I failed to find the house; so we plodded on, past the church, and took to a main road. After walking two kilometres we switched south along a by-road that led to the position B Battery had occupied. Not a soul had passed since we took to the main road; the Boche shells, now arriving in greater numbers, seemed, as is always the case at night, nearer than they actually were.

Sounds of horses and of orders sharply given! It was the last section of B Battery pulling out; in command young Stenson, a round-faced, newly-joined officer, alert and eager,

and not ill-pleased with the responsibility placed upon him. "Have the other sections got up all right?" I asked him. "Yes," he answered, "although they were shelled just before getting in, and Bannister was wounded—hit in the face, not seriously, I think." Bannister, poor fellow, died three days later.

The doctor and I passed on, following a shell-plastered road that wound towards a rough wooden bridge, put up a week before; thence across soggy ground and over the railway crossing. There was a slight smell of gas, and without a word to each other we placed our box-respirators in the alert position. To avoid the passage of a column of ammunition waggons crunching along one of the narrow streets we stepped inside a crumbling house. No sign of furniture, not even a stove, but in one corner—quaint relic of less eventful days—a sewing-machine, not even rusted.

A grove of poplars embowered the quarry that we were seeking; and soon our steps were guided by the neighing of horses, and by the raised voice of the R.S.M. engaged in hectoring his drivers. The doctor and I were to share a smelly dug-out, in which all the flies in the world seemed to have congregated. The doctor examined at length the Boche wire bed allotted to him, and refused to admit that it was as comfortable as the one left behind. However, he expressed satisfaction with the mahogany sideboard that some previous occupant had loaned from a neighbouring house; our servants had bespread it with newspapers and had made a washing-table of it.

The doctor quickly settled himself to sleep, but there were tasks for me. "This is where I'm the nasty man," exclaimed Major Veasey, descending the dug-out with a signalling watch in his hand. "I'm afraid I shall have to ask you to take the time round to the batteries and to the —th Brigade, who aren't in communication yet with Divisional Artillery. Sorry to fire you out in the dark—but secrecy, you know."

Zero hour was timed for 4.40 A.M.; it was now 11.30 P.M.; so I donned steel helmet and box-respirator, and was moving off when a loud clear voice called from the road, "Is this —nd Brigade Headquarters?" It was Major Simpson of A Battery, buoyant and debonair. "Hallo!" he burst forth, noticing me. "Where are you bound for? . . . Um—yes! . . . I think I can save you part of the journey. . . . I'm here, and Lamswell is coming along. . . . We're both going to the new positions."

Captain Lamswell of C Battery suddenly appearing, accompanied by young Beale of B Battery, we made our way to the mess, where Major Veasey and the adjutant were sorting out alterations in the operation orders just brought by a D.A. despatch-rider. Beale and Major Simpson slaughtered a few dozen flies, and accepted whiskies-and-

sodas. Then I synchronised watches with representatives of the three batteries present, and young Beale said that he would check the time with D Battery, who were only two minutes' walk from B. That left me to call upon the —th Brigade, who lay on the far side of the village three parts of a mile out.

We set out, talking and jesting. There was a high expectancy in the air that affected all of us. Major Simpson broke off humming "We are the robbers of the wood" to say, "Well, if this show comes off to-morrow, leave ought to start again." "I should shay sho," put in Lamswell in his best Robey-cum-Billy Merson manner. "Doesn't interest me much," said I. "I'm such a long way down the list that it will be Christmas before I can hope to go. The colonel told me to put in for a few days in Paris while we were out at rest last month, but I've heard nothing more about it."

When Major Simpson, Lamswell, and Beale, with cheery "Good night," made for the sunken road that led past the dressing station, and then over the crest to their new positions, I kept on my way, leaving a red-brick, barn-like factory on my left, and farther along a tiny cemetery. Now that I was in open country, and alone, I became more keenly sensitive to the damp mournfulness of the night. What if to-morrow should result in failure? It was only four months since the Hun was swamping us with his tempestuous might! Brooding menace seemed in the air. A sudden burst of fire from four 5·9's on to the cross-roads I had just passed whipped my nerves into still greater tension.

I strode on, bending my mind to the task in hand.

. . . . . .

At 4.40 A.M. I lifted my head to listen to the sound of the opening barrage—a ceaseless crackle and rumble up in front. I had not taken off my clothes, and quickly ascended the dug-out steps. Five hundred yards away a 60-pdr. battery belched forth noise and flame; two 8-inch hows. on the far side of the road numbed the hearing and made the earth tremble. A pleasant enough morning: the sun just climbing above the shell-shattered, leaf-bare woods in front; the moon dying palely on the other horizon; even a school of fast-wheeling birds in the middle distance. Ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, half an hour. Still no enemy shells in this support area. Could it be that the attack had really surprised the Boche?

I turned into the adjutant's dug-out and found him lying down, telephone to his ear. "Enemy reply barrage only slight," he was repeating.

"Any news?" I asked.

"The —th Brigade tanks are going well," he answered. "B battery have had a gun knocked out and four men hit. No communication with any of the other batteries."

By seven o'clock we were breakfasting, and Major Veasey

announced his intention of going forward to seek information. A grey clinging mist had enveloped the countryside. "Something like March 21st," said the Major as he and I set out. "We said it helped the Boche then. I hope we don't have to use it as an excuse for any failure to-day. Difficult for observers," he added thoughtfully.

At the dressing station in the sunken road we learned that one battery of our companion Field Artillery Brigade had suffered severely from gas. All the officers had been sent down, and a large proportion of the gunners. The sickly-sweet smell hung faintly over most of the ground in the neighbourhood of our batteries as well. B and C were now firing fifty rounds an hour. "The major's asleep in that dug-out," volunteered Beale of B, pointing to a hole in a bank that allowed at least two feet of air space above Major Bullivant's recumbent form. The major was unshaven; his fair hair was tousled. He had turned up the collar of his British Warm. Beale also looked unkempt, but he said he had had three hours' sleep before the barrage started and felt quite fresh. "Our casualties came just after we got the guns in," he told me. "They dropped two whizz-bangs between No. 1 gun and No. 2."

Major Simpson was up and eating hot sizzling bacon in a trench, with a cable drum for a seat and an ammunition box as table. Two of his subalterns: Overbury, who won the M.C. on March 21st, and Bob Pottinger, all smiles and appetite — at any rate this morning — had also fallen to, and wanted Major Veasey and myself to drink a cup of tea. "We're taking a short rest," remarked Major Simpson cheerfully. "I'm glad I moved the battery away from the track over there. No shell has come within three hundred yards of us. . . . We have had a difficulty about the wires. Wilde said he laid wires from brigade to all the new positions before we came in last night, but my signallers haven't found their wire yet; so we laid a line to B and got through that way."

Infantry Brigade Headquarters was in a ravine four hundred yards away. A batch of prisoners had just arrived and were being questioned by an Intelligence Officer: youngish men most of them, sallow-skinned, with any arrogance they may have possessed knocked out of them by now. They were the first Huns I remember seeing with steel helmets daubed with staring colours by way of camouflage. "They say we were not expected to attack to-day," I heard the Intelligence Officer mention to the G.S.O. II. of the Division, who had just come up.

"Is that one of your batteries?" asked the Infantry Brigade signalling officer, an old friend of mine, pointing to our D Battery, a hundred yards from Brigade Headquarters. "What a noise they

made. We haven't had a wink of sleep. How many thousand rounds have they fired?"

"Oh, it'll be about 1500 by midday, I expect," I answered. "Any news?"

"It's going all right now, I believe. Bit sticky at the start — my communications have gone perfectly, so far—touch wood."

More prisoners kept coming in; limping, bandaged men passed on their way down; infantry runners in khaki shorts, and motor-cycle despatch-riders, hurried up and buzzed around the Brigade Headquarters; inside when the telephone bell wasn't ringing the brigade-major could be heard demanding reports from battalions, or issuing fresh instructions. There was so little fuss that there seemed numbers of quiet self-contained men standing about doing nothing. Occasional high-velocity shells whizzed over our heads.

Major Veasey suddenly emerged from the brigade-major's quarters, looking at his map. "Some of the Tanks and two companies of the ——s lost their way at the start," he told me, "but things have been pulled straight now. The —rd Brigade have gone right ahead. A hundred and twenty prisoners up to date. Down south the Australians are on their final objective.

"Yoicks!—this is the stuff to give 'em! Now we'll go and have a look at my battery."

Captain Drysdale, who was commanding during Major Veasey's absence from the 4·5 battery, said that the programme had been carried through without a hitch, although it had been difficult in the night to get the hows. on to their aiming posts without lights. "Kelly has gone forward, and has got a message through. He says he saw some of our firing, and the line was extraordinarily good."

"Good old Kelly!" said Major Veasey, puffing at his pipe. "I don't know whether we shall be ordered to move forward to-day; we shan't until the situation is thoroughly clear. But I shall go forward now with Simpson and Bullivant to spy out the land. You'd better cut back to Headquarters with what news we've got. Division will be wanting something definite."

When about 3 P.M. Major Veasey returned, footsore and wearied, he brought news that our Infantry Brigade that had reached its final objective had had to come back, owing to the stoutness of the machine-gun opposition. The attack would be renewed in the morning, and the batteries would not move forward that evening.

The adjutant was opening the latest batch of official envelopes from Divisional Artillery. With a laugh he flourished a yellow paper. "Why, here's your leave to Paris," he called out.

"Certainly, I should take it," was Major Veasey's comment. "Why, I knew one C.R.A. who never stopped an officer's leave when they were

in action. It was only when the Division was at rest that he wouldn't let them go. Said he wanted them for training then. You pop off."

And as this is a true tale, I hereby record that I did go to Paris, and returned in full time to participate in the brave days that witnessed Britain's greatest triumphs of the war.

VII.

Short leave to Paris ought to bequeath a main impression of swift transition from the dirt, danger, and comfortlessness of the trenches to broad pavements, shop windows, well-dressed women, smooth courtliness, and restaurant luxuries; to fresh incisive talks on politics and the Arts, to meetings with old friends and visits to well-remembered haunts of the Paris one knew before August 1914. Instead the wearing discomforts of the journey are likely to retain chief hold upon the memory. Can I ever forget how we waited seven hours for a train due at 9.25 P.M. at a station that possessed no forms to sit upon, so that some of the men lay at full length and slept on the asphalt platform? And is there not a corner of my memory for the crawling fusty leave-train that had bare planks nailed across the door spaces of some of the "officers'" compartments; a train so packed that we three officers took turns on the one spare seat in an "other ranks" carriage. And then about 8 A.M. we landed at a well-known "all-change" siding, a spot of such vivid recollections that some one had pencilled in the ablution-house, "If the Huns ever take —— Camp and have to hold it they'll give up the war in disgust."

But in the queue of officers waiting at the Y.M.C.A. hut for tea and boiled eggs was the brigade-major of a celebrated Divisional Artillery. He stood in front of me looking bored and dejected. I happened to pass him a cup of tea. As he thanked me he asked, "Aren't you fed up with this journey? Let's see the R.T.O. and inquire about a civilian train!" "If you'll take me under your wing, sir," I responded quickly. So we entered Paris by a fast train,—as did my two companions of the night before, who had followed my tip of doing what I did without letting outsiders see that there was any collusion.

The brigade-major's wife was awaiting him in Paris, and I dined with them at the Ritz and took them to lunch next day at Henry's, where the frogs' legs were delicious and the chicken a recompense for that nightmare of a train journey. Veill's was another restaurant which retained a proper touch of the Paris before the war—perfect cooking, courtly waiting, and prices not too high. I have pleasant recollections also of Fouquet's in the Champs Elysées, and of an almost divine

meal at the Tour d'Argent, on the other side of the river, where Frederic of the Ibsen whiskers used once to reign: the delicacy of the *soufflée* of turbot! the succulent tenderness of the *caneton à la presse!* the seductive flavour of the raspberries and whipped cream!

The French Government apparently realise that the famous restaurants of Paris are a national asset. There was no shortage of waiters; and, though the choice of dishes was much more limited than it used to be, the real curtailment extended only to cheese, sugar, and butter. Our bread-tickets brought us as much bread as we could reasonably expect.

One day, in the Rue de la Paix, I met a well-known English producer of plays, and he piloted me to the Café de Paris, which seemed to have lost nothing of its special atmosphere of smartness and costliness. Louis the Rotund, who in the early days of the war went off to guard bridges and gasometers, was playing his more accustomed *rôle* of *maître d'hôtel*, explaining with suave gravity the unpreventable altitude of prices. And for at least the tenth time he told me how in his young-man soldiering days he came upon the spring whose waters have since become world-famous.

Another night I ascended Montmartre, and dined under the volatile guidance of Paul, who used to be a pillar of the Abbaye Theléme. Paul came once to London, in the halcyon days of the Four Hundred Club, when nothing disturbed him more than open windows and doors. "Keep the guests dancing and the windows tight-closed, and you sell your champagne," was his business motto. However, he was pleased to see me again, and insisted on showing me his own particular way of serving Cantelupe melon. Before scooping out each mouthful you inserted the prongs of your fork into a lemon, and this lent the slightest of lemon flavouring to the luscious sweetness of the melon.

America seemed to be in full possession of the restaurant and boulevard life of Paris during those August days. Young American officers, with plenty of money to spend, were everywhere. "You see," a Parisienne explained, "before the war the Americans we had seen had been mostly rich, middle-aged, business men. But when the American officers came, Paris found that they were many, that many of them were young as well as well-off, and that many of them were well-off, young, and good-looking. It is quite *chic* to lunch or dine with an American officer."

The Americans have carried out their propaganda in their usual thorough, enthusiastic fashion. I was taken to the Élysée Palace Hotel, where I found experienced publicists and numbers of charming well-bred women busy preparing information for the newspapers, and arranging public entertainments and sight-seeing tours for American troops in

Paris, all with the idea of emphasising that Americans were now pouring into France in thousands. One night a smiling grey-haired lady stopped before a table where four of us, all British officers, were dining, and said, "You're English, aren't you? Well, have you been with any of 'our boys'? . . . Have you seen them in action? . . . They're fine, aren't they?" We were surprised, perhaps a little taken aback at first, but we showed sympathetic understanding of the American lady's enthusiasm, and responded in a manner that left her pleased as ever.

Before returning to the Front I got in a day's golf at La Boulie, and also made a train journey to a village the other side of Fontainebleau, where an old friend, invalided from the French army, had settled on a considerable estate, and thought of nothing but the fruits and vegetables and dairy produce he was striving to improve and increase. I did not visit many theatres; it struck me that the Paris stage, like that of London, was undergoing a war phase—unsophisticated, ready-to-be-pleased audiences bringing prosperity to very mediocre plays.

. . . . . .

My journey back to the line included a stay at a depôt where officers were speedily reminded that they had left the smooth luxuriousness of Paris behind them. The mess regulations opened with "Try to treat the mess as a mess and not as a public-house," and contained such additional instructions as, "Do not place glasses on the floor," and "Officers will always see that they are in possession of sufficient cash to pay mess bills."

I found the brigade three and a half miles in advance of where I had left them. There had been a lot of stiff fighting, and on our front the British forces had not gone so far forward as the corps immediately south of us had done. Big things were afoot, however, and that very night batteries and Brigade Headquarters moved up another three thousand yards. A snack of bully beef and bread and cheese at 7 P.M., and the colonel and a monocled Irish major, who was working under the colonel as "learner" for command of a brigade, went off to see the batteries. The adjutant and myself, bound for the new Headquarters, followed ten minutes later.

"You know that poor old Lamswell has gone," he said, as we crossed a grassy stretch, taking a ruined aerodrome as our guiding mark. "Poor chap, he was wounded at the battery position the day after you left. Only a slight wound in the leg from a gas-shell, and every one thought he had got a comfortable 'Blighty.' But gangrene set in, and he was dead in three days. Beastly things those gas-shells! . . . Kent, too, got one through the shoulder from a sniper, and he's gone to England. The colonel was with him at the O.P., and tried to get the

sniper afterwards with a rifle."

"How is the colonel?" I asked.

"Oh, he's going very strong; active as ever. Colonel —— is back from leave and doing C.R.A. now. We're under the —th Division at the moment."

We reached a narrow road, crowded with battery ammunition waggons going up to the new positions. Darkness had descended, and when you got off the road to avoid returning vehicles it was necessary to walk warily to escape tumbling into shell-holes. "The blighters have got a new way of worrying us now," went on the adjutant. "They've planted land-mines all over the place, particularly near tracks. Lead-horses are always liable to put a foot against the wire that connects with the mine, and when the thing goes off some one is nearly always hurt. D Battery had a nasty experience this afternoon. Kelly tried to take a section forward, and the Boche spotted them and shelled them to blazes. As they came back to get away from observation one of the teams disturbed a land-mine. The limber was blown up, and one driver and two horses were killed. . . . Look here, if we move off in this direction we ought to save time; the railway must be over there and the place for our Headquarters is not far from it, in a trench where the O.P. used to be."

We found ourselves on some shell-torn ground that was cut up also by short spans of trenches. One part of it looked exactly like another, and after ten minutes or so we decided that we were wandering to no purpose. "There are some old German gun-pits close by," panted the adjutant in further explanation of the place we were seeking. All at once I saw a thin shaft of light, and blundered my way towards it. It proved to be a battery mess, made in a recess of a trench, with a stout tarpaulin drawn tight over the entrance. I hailed the occupants through the tarpaulin, and on their invitation scrambled a passage inside. A young captain and two subalterns listened to what I had to say, and gave me map co-ordinates of the spot on which we now were. When I mentioned German gun-pits the captain responded with more helpful suggestions. "It's difficult finding your way across country, because the trenches wind about so, but if you follow this trench as it curves to the right, and when you come to an old British dug-out blown right in, go due north across country; you'll come to the railway," he said.

We thanked him, plodded on, reached a point on the railway quite half a mile beyond the spot we wanted, and then out of the darkness heard the voice of Henry of C Battery. We drew near, and found him in the mood of a man ready to fight the whole world. "Dam fools," he grumbled; "there's a sergeant of B Battery who's taken a wrong turning and gone into the blue, and half a dozen of my waggons have followed him. . . . And A Battery

have a waggon tipped over on the railway line, just where we all cross, and that's holding everything else up."

As we could be of no assistance to the distressful Henry we continued our own search, and, by hailing all within call, eventually reached our trench, where we found the colonel, always in good mood when something practical wanted doing, superintending Headquarters' occupation of the place. "Major Mallaby-Kelby, the doctor, the adjutant, and myself can fix up under here," he said, pointing to a large tarpaulin fastened across the trench. "The signallers have got the mined dug-out round the corner, and you," he went on, referring to me, "had better start now fixing Wilde and yourself up. We'll make that gun-pit with the camouflaged roofing into a mess to-morrow."

With the aid of the servants I gathered six long two-inch planks, and placed them across the part of the trench that seemed best protected from enemy shells. A spare trench cover pulled full stretch on top of these planks lent additional immunity from rain. A little shovelling to level the bottom of the trench; and Wilde's servant and mine laid out our valises. A heap of German wicker ammunition-carriers, sorted out on the ground, served as a rough kind of mattress for the colonel. The doctor had fastened upon a spare stretcher. In half an hour we were all seeking sleep.

Zero hour was at 1 A.M., a most unusual time for the infantry to launch an attack. But this would increase the element of surprise, and the state of the moon favoured the enterprise. When hundreds of guns started their thunder I got up to see, and found the doctor on the top of the trench also. Bursts of flame leapt up all around us, and for miles to right and left of us. The noise was deafening. When one has viewed scores of modern artillery barrages one's impressions become routine impressions, so to speak; but the night, and the hundreds and hundreds of vivid jumping flashes, made this 1 A.M. barrage seem the most tremendous, most violently terrible of my experience. The doctor, looking a bit chilled, gazed long and solemnly at the spectacle, and for once his national gift of expressing his feelings failed him.

When news of the results of the operation came to us it was of a surprising character. The infantry had moved forward under cover of the barrage, had reached their first objective, and had continued their advance two miles without encountering opposition. The Boche had stolen away before our guns loosed off their fury. I only saw three prisoners brought in, and some one tried to calculate the thousands of pounds worth of ammunition wasted on the "barrage." A message came that we were to hold ourselves in readiness to rejoin our own Divisional Artillery; our companion Field Artillery Brigade, the —rd, would march also. At 6.30 P.M. the orders arrived. We were to trek northwards,

about four thousand yards as the crow flies, and be in touch with our C.R.A. early next morning.

That night rain fell in torrents. When we had dined, and all the kit had been packed up, we sheltered in the gun-pit, awaiting our horses and the baggage-waggons. As the rain found fresh ways of coming through the leaky roof, we shifted the boxes on which we sat; all of us except the colonel, who, allowing his chin to sink upon his breast, slept peacefully for three-quarters of an hour. It was pitch-dark outside, and the trench had become a glissade of slimy mud. It was certain that the drivers would miss their way, and two of the signallers who had gone out to guide them along the greasy track from the railway crossing had come back after an hour's wait. After a time we ceased trying to stem the rivulets that poured into the gun-pit; we ceased talking also, and gave ourselves up to settled gloom, all except the colonel, who had picked upon the one dry spot and still slept.

But things mostly come right in the end. The rain stopped, a misty moon appeared; the vehicles came along, and by 10.30 P.M. the colonel was on his mare, picking a way for our little column around shell-holes, across water-logged country, until we struck a track leading direct to a village in which the brigade had been billeted during 1915. It was a strangely silent march. There was a rumbling of guns a long way to north of us, and that was all. The Boche had undoubtedly stolen away. For a long time the only sound was the warning shout, passed from front to rear, that told of shell-holes in the roadway.

On the outskirts of the village we saw signs of the Hun evacuation: deserted huts and stables, a couple of abandoned motor-lorries. The village itself was a wreck, a dust-heap, not a wall left whole after our terrific bombardments when the place itself again fell into Boche hands. Not a soul in the streets, not a single house habitable even for troops. Of the mill that had been Brigade Headquarters three years before, one tiny fragment of a red-brick wall was left. The bridge in front of it had been scattered to the winds; and such deep shell-craters pitted the ground and received the running water, that the very river-bed had dried up. On the other side of the village batteries of our own and of our companion brigade moved slowly along. It was 2 A.M. when we encamped in a wide meadow off the road. When the horses had been tethered and fed and the men had erected their bivouacs, the colonel, Major Mallaby-Kelby, and we five remaining officers turned into one tent, pulled off boots and leggings, and slept the heavy dreamless sleep of healthily tired men.

At 7 A.M. the colonel announced that he and myself would ride up to B—— Chateau

to visit the C.R.A. We touched the southern edge of a town familiar to thousands of British soldiers. The last time I had been there was on my return from leave in January 1917, when I dined and slept at the newly-opened officers' club. Since the Boche swoop last March it had become a target for British gunners, and seemed in as bad a plight as the village we had come through the night before. We had no time to visit it that morning, and trotted on along a road lined with unburied German dead, scattered ammunition, and broken German vehicles. The road dipped into a wood, and the colonel showed me the first battery position he occupied in France, when he commanded a 4·5 how. battery. B—— Chateau was so much a chateau now that Divisional Headquarters were living in tents outside. Four motor-cars stood in the courtyard; some thirty chargers were tied to the long high railings; motor despatch-riders kept coming and going. R.A. were on the far side of the chateau, and when our grooms had taken our horses we leapt a couple of trenches and made our way to the brigade-major's tent. The brigade-major was frankly pleased with the situation. "We are going right over the old ground, sir," he told the colonel, "and the Boche has not yet made a proper stand. Our Divisional Infantry are in the line again, and their latest report, timed 6 A.M., comes from M——, and says that they are approaching Z—— Wood. We shall be supporting them to-morrow morning, and the C.R.A. is anxious for positions to be reconnoitred in X 10 and X 11. The C.R.A. has gone up that way in the car this morning."

I looked into an adjoining tent and found the liaison officer from the heavies busy on the telephone. "A 5·9 battery shooting from the direction of ——. Right! You can't give me a more definite map-spotting? Right-o! We'll attend to it! Give me counter-batteries, will you?"

"Heavies doing good work to-day?" I asked.

"Rather," he returned happily. "Why, we've got a couple of 8-inch hows. as far up as F——. That's more forward than most of the field-guns."

As I stepped out there came the swift screaming rush of three high-velocity shells. They exploded with an echoing crash in the wood below, near where my horse and the colonel's had been taken to water. A team came up the incline toward the chateau at the trot, and I looked rather anxiously for our grooms. They rode up within two minutes, collectedly, but with a strained look. "Did those come anywhere near you?" I inquired. "We just missed 'em, sir," replied Loneridge. "One of them dropped right among the horses at one trough."

By the colonel's orders I rode back to the waggon lines soon afterwards, bearing instructions to the battery commander to join the colonel at half-past one. The Brigade might expect to move up that evening.

The battery commanders came back by tea-time with plans for the move up that evening completed. The waggon lines were full of sleeping gunners during the afternoon; a sensible course, as it proved, for at 6.45 P.M. an orderly brought the adjutant a pencilled message from the colonel who was still with the C.R.A. It ran—

> Warn batteries that they must have gun limbers and firing battery waggons within 1000 yards of their positions by 3.30 A.M., as we shall probably move at dawn. Headquarters will be ready to start after an early dinner. I am returning by car.

"Hallo! they're expecting a big advance to-morrow," said the adjutant. The note also decided a discussion in which the adjutant, the signalling officer, and the cook had joined as to whether we should dine early and pack up ready to go, or pack up and have dinner when we got to the new position.

It was a dark night again; several brigades of artillery were taking the same route as ourselves, and, apart from the congestion, our own guns had shelled this part so consistently since August 8 that the going was heavy and hazardous. We passed one team with two horses down; at another point an 18-pdr. had slipped into a shell-hole, and the air rang with staccato shouts of "Heave!" while two lines of men strained on the drag-ropes. We reached a damp valley that lay west of a stretch of tree-stumps and scrubby undergrowth—remnants of what was a thick leafy wood before the hurricane bombardments of July 1916. D Battery had pulled their six hows. into the valley; the three 18-pdr. batteries were taking up positions on top of the eastern slope. Before long it became clear that the Boche 5·9 gunners had marked the place down.

"I'm going farther along to X 30 A, and shall stay with the Infantry Brigadier," the colonel told me in his quick incisive way. "Major Mallaby-Kelby and the adjutant will come with me. You will stay here with Wilde, and pass orders from us to the batteries. There are some Boche huts in that bank, and I picked one for you this afternoon."

There was indeed a row of beautifully made wooden huts, quite new, covered with waterproof felt, lined with matchboarding, and fitted with cupboards and comfort-bringing devices. The Boche naturally has no scruples about cutting down trees for material for his dwelling-places, but he also seems to possess an unlimited number of workmen, who lavish skill and care in making them pleasant to live in. Major Veasey had taken possession of a truly palatial hut for his mess. "Our infantry only got here to-day," he said, "and they captured some of the men who were adding the finishing touches." Major Simpson and Major

Bartlett had set up a joint mess, and there was an ample supply of wire beds. Major Bullivant's officers were housed three hundred yards away.

Wilde came in full of a dispute he had had with Dumble as to whether Headquarter signallers or B Battery's servants should occupy a certain dug-out with a corrugated-iron roof. "Dumble said he was there first, and claimed it on that ground," said Wilde, "but I told him the colonel had said I could have it, and that concluded the entertainment."

We had left "Swiffy," the veterinary officer, at the waggon line, but the doctor had accompanied us, and he was first to curl himself up on his stretcher. Wilde and I posted ourselves on a couple of raised wire beds.

The adjutant always said that the doctor was able to snore in five different keys. He started off that night with a series of reverberating blasts that caused Wilde to laugh hysterically and call out, "For Heaven's sake, Doc, be quiet, or you'll give the position away to the Boche." But the doctor didn't hear the appeal; nor did he wake up when three high-velocity shells landed a hundred yards away on top of the hill behind us. The huts were, of course, on the wrong side of the valley from our point of view of Boche shelling, and many more shells whizzed shrilly over our heads before the night was out.

Half an hour after we had fallen asleep an orderly woke me with a "secret" communication that gave 4.50 A.M. as zero hour, and I circulated the news to the batteries. Some time later the telephone bell aroused me, and the adjutant said he wanted to give me the time. Some one had knocked over my stub of candle, and after vainly groping for it on the floor, I kicked Wilde, and succeeded in making him understand that if he would light a candle and check his watch, I would hang on to the telephone. Dazed with sleep, Wilde clambered to his feet, trod once or twice on the doctor, and lighted a candle.

"Are you ready?" asked the voice at the other end of the telephone. "Ready, Wilde?" said I in my turn.

"I'll give it you when it's four minutes to one . . . thirty seconds to go," went on the adjutant.

Now Wilde always says that the first thing he heard was my calling "thirty seconds to go!" and that I did not give him the "four minutes to one" part of the ceremony. I always tell him he must have been half asleep, and didn't hear me. At any rate, the dialogue continued like this—

Adjutant (over the telephone to me): "Twenty seconds to go."

Me (to Wilde): "Twenty seconds to go."

Wilde: "Twenty seconds."

Adjutant: "Ten seconds to go."

Me: "Ten seconds."

Wilde: "Ten seconds."

Adjutant: "Five seconds."

Me: "Five."

Wilde: "Five."

Adjutant: "Now! Four minutes to one."

Me: NOW! Four minutes to one."

Wilde (blankly): "But you didn't tell me what time it was going to be."

It was useless arguing, and I had to ring up the adjutant again. As a matter of fact it was the colonel who answered, and supplied me with the "five seconds to go" information; so there was no doubt about the correctness of the time-taking on this occasion, and after I had gone out and roused an officer of each battery, and made him check his watch, I turned in again and sought sleep.

VIII.

For three hours after zero hour our guns spat fire, firing down from four rounds a gun a minute to the slow rate of one round each minute. The enemy artillery barked back furiously for the first two hours, but got very few shells into our valley; and after a time we paid little heed to the 5·9's and 4·2's that dropped persistently on the top of the western slope. An 8-inch that had landed in the valley about midnight had wrought frightful execution, however. Another brigade lay next to us; in fact one of their batteries had occupied a position intended for our C Battery. The shell fell with a blinding crash among their horses, which they had kept up near the guns in readiness for the morning; and for half an hour the darkness was pierced by the cries and groans of wounded men, and the sound of revolvers putting horses out of their pain. Four drivers had been killed and twenty-nine horses knocked out. "A lucky escape for us," was the grim, not unsympathetic comment of C Battery.

All through the morning the messages telephoned to me indicated that the fighting up forward had been hard and relentless. Our infantry had advanced, but twice before eleven o'clock I had to dash out with S.O.S. calls; and at intervals I turned each battery on to enemy points for which special artillery treatment was demanded.

The colonel ordered Wilde and myself to join the forward Headquarters party after lunch. We found them in a small square hut, built at the foot of a range of hills that rose almost sheer 200 feet up, and curled round north-east to a familiar valley in which our batteries had spent a bitter punishing time during the third week of July 1916. The hut contained four wire beds and a five-foot shaft in one corner, where a solitary telephonist crouched uncomfortably at his task. The hut was so cramped for space that one had to shift the table—a map-board laid upon a couple of boxes—in order to move round it.

The winding road outside presented a moving war panorama that afternoon. Two Infantry Brigades and their staffs, and some of the battalion commanders, had huts under the hillside, and by four o'clock battalions returned from the battle were digging themselves sheltering holes higher up the hillside. Boche prisoners in slow marching twenties and thirties kept coming along also; some of them used as stretcher-bearers to carry their own and our wounded; others turned on to the odd jobs that the Army call fatigues. I found one long-haired, red-eyed fellow chopping wood for our cook; my appearance caused a signaller, noted for his Hyde Park Corner method of oratory, to cease abruptly a turgid denunciation of the Hun and all his works.

The talk was all of a counter-attack by which a battalion of Prussian Guards had won back the eastern corner of a wood that had been one of our objectives. One of the Infantry Brigadiers, a tall, tireless, fighting soldier, who started the war as a captain, had come round to discuss with the colonel artillery support for the fresh attack his brigade were to make at 5.45 P.M. This Brigadier was rather apt to regard 18-pounders as machine-guns; and it was sometimes instructive to note the cool good-humoured way in which the colonel guided his enthusiasm into saner channels. "You're giving me one forward section of 18-pounders there," began the Brigadier, marking the map. "Now,"—placing a long lean forefinger on a point 150 yards behind our most advanced infantry post, — "couldn't I have another little fellow there? — that would tickle him up."

The colonel smiled through his glasses. "I don't think we should be helping you more, sir, by doing that. . . . I can shoot on that point with observed fire as well from where the batteries are as from up there; and think of the difficulty of getting ammunition up."

"Right!" responded the General, and turned immediately to the subject of the 4·5 how. targets.

I went outside, and saw Judd at the head of the two guns of A Battery, that were to be the forward section in the attack, going by at the trot. As he passed he gave me an "I'm for it" grin. I knew that he was trotting his teams because the corner of the valley was still under enemy observation, and had been shelled all day. Bob Pottinger was following in rear.

Five minutes after the two guns passed, the Boche began a hellish strafe upon a battery that had perched itself under the crest of the hill. A couple of hundred 5·9's came over, and we had a view of rapid awe-inspiring bursts, and of men rushing for cover. "Good shooting that," remarked the colonel who had come to the doorway.

The Brigadier paid us an-

other visit late that night. He was almost boyish in his glee. "A perfect little show," he told the colonel. "Your forward guns did very fine work indeed. And the 6-inch hows. gave the wood an awful pasting. From the reports that have come in we only took seven Boche prisoners; practically all the rest were killed."

So we took our rest that night, content in the knowledge that things were going well. There being only four beds, one of us would have to doss down on the floor. The colonel insisted on coming into our "odd man out" gamble. The bare boards fell to me; but I slept well. The canvas bag containing my spare socks fitted perfectly into the hollow of my hips—the chief recipe for securing comfort on hard ground.

Réveille was provided by the bursting of an 8-inch shell on the other side of the road. It removed part of the roof of our hut, and smothered the rest with a ponderous shower of earth. We shaved and washed by the roadside, and Major Mallaby-Kelby contrived a rapid and complete change of underclothing, also in the open air.

By 8.30 A.M. the colonel, Major Mallaby-Kelby, and the battery commanders, were walking briskly through the valley and on to the rolling country beyond, reconnoitring for positions to which the batteries would move in the afternoon. Wilde and myself accompanied them, and as Judd and Bob Pottinger were also of the party, I heard more details of what A Battery's forward section had done the evening before.

"I saw you turn into the valley at the trot," I said to Judd.

"Yes, by Gad," he replied; "and when we got into the valley we made it a canter. Those dead horses will show you what the valley has been like."

We were striding through the valley now—a death-trap passage, two hundred yards across at its widest point, and less than three-quarters of a mile long. I counted twenty-seven dead horses, lying in grotesque attitudes, some of them cruelly mangled. The narrow-gauge railway had become scattered bits of scrap-iron, the ground a churned waste of shell-holes.

"And the worst of it was that the traces of the second team broke," Pottinger chimed in. "Judd had gone on ahead, and we hadn't any spare traces. So I sent that team back out of the way, followed the first gun, and brought the team back to take up the second gun. Damned good team that, E sub-section. You remember the team we were training for the 'Alarm Race' when we were out at ——? That's the one. . . . And the old Boche was peppering the valley all the time."

"Did the Boche shell much during the attack?" I asked.

"Well," continued Pottinger, "he gave the guns most of the shelling ——. I was shooting the battery and Judd was doing F.O.O. with the

infantry, — and where Judd was it was mostly machine-guns."

"Yes," said Judd, "I got the wind-up with those machine-guns. I couldn't find the Battalion Headquarters at first, and it was 150 yards from the wood. The first lot of machine-gun bullets went in front of me; one plopped into a bank just past my foot. It was dam funny. I spun right round. . . . But the infantry colonel, the colonel of the ——s, was a brave man. We only had a tiny dug-out, and every time you got out the machine-guns started. But he didn't mind; he got out and saw for himself everything that was going on. Didn't seem to worry him at all. . . . And I shall never forget the way the heavies lammed it into the wood. They had half an hour, six batteries of 6-inch howitzers, before the 18-pounders put in a five minutes' burst of shrapnel. . . . They say the wood is choked with German dead."

It was this self-same colonel who wrote to his brigadier commending the fine work of Judd and Pottinger on that day. Before October was out each was wearing the M.C. ribbon.

Battery positions being selected, the colonel, Major Mallaby-Kelby, and myself cast round for a headquarters. Some machine-gunners had taken possession of the only possible dug-outs. However, there were numerous huts, abandoned by the Hun, and I was chalking our claim on a neat building with a latched door and glass windows, and a garden-seat outside, when the colonel, who was gazing through his binoculars at the long, dense, hillside wood that marked the eastern edge of the valley, said in his decisive way, "What's that Swiss châlet at the top of the gully in the centre of wood? . . . Looks a proper sort of place for headquarters! . . . Let's go and inspect it."

The view through the binoculars was not deceptive; indeed, when we plunged into the wood and made the steep climb up to the châlet, we passed five or six beautifully-built huts hidden among the trees. The châlet was equipped with a most attractive verandah; a hundred feet below stood a larger wooden building, covered with black felt and lined with match-boarding. The main room possessed tables obviously made by expert carpenters, and a roomy bench, with a sloping back, that went round two sides of the apartment. An inner bedroom contained a wood-framed bed with a steel spring-mattress and a number of plush-bottomed chairs. The Boche had extended his craftsmanship to the neat slats that covered the joinings of the wall-planks and kept out draughts. All the wood used was new and speckless, and smelt sweet and clean. The other huts were constructed with similar attention to detail. Also, one came across tables and benches in shady nooks, and arbours of the kind found in German beer-gardens.

"Jehoshaphat," gasped Major Mallaby-Kelby, "this is indeed

the height of war luxury." The colonel, who was going on leave next day, not having been in England since the early part of January, smiled in his turn, and jested upon the desirability of delaying his departure until we vacated this delightful retreat. Wilde and myself nosed about joyously, chalking the name of our unit on every door within reach. From a Boche artillery map picked up in the châlet we concluded that the place must have been the summer quarters of a Hun artillery group commander.

And then without warning our satisfaction was changed to disappointment. Major Mallaby-Kelby had just called out that the place was so complete that even a funk-hole had been provided, when a gunner emerged.

"What are you doing here?" inquired the major in surprise.

"I'm left here until our brigade headquarters come in, sir," the gunner replied promptly.

"What brigade?"

"The —rd, sir," said the gunner, naming our companion artillery brigade.

"When did Colonel —— take over?" asked the colonel.

"About an hour ago, sir. He left me to look after the place until brigade headquarters came in this afternoon."

We looked solemnly at one another. "We've been forestalled," said the colonel with mock despair. Then with brisk decision, "Well, there are plenty more huts about here. We'll hurry up and get settled before other people come along."

. . . . . .

The colonel left us during the afternoon. The C.R.A.'s car was to come for him at headquarters waggon line early next morning. The doctor, who was now living with Swift, the veterinary officer, and the French interpreter at the waggon line, had visited our new quarters in the wood, and hoicked off our last but one bottle of whisky. I had despatched a frantic S.O.S., coupled with 100 francs in cash, to the colonel, begging him to take the interpreter to Boulogne so as to replenish our mess supplies. Our good friends of the —rd Brigade had occupied the châlet, and received one sharp reminder that the Boche gunner was still a nasty animal. A high-velocity shell had hit the edge of the gully not ten yards from them, and their adjutant and their intelligence officer had described to me their acrobatic plunge into the funk-hole. Major Mallaby-Kelby was commanding our brigade in the absence of the colonel, and already our signal-wires buzzed with reports that indicated a a very short sojourn in our new home in the wood.

I am making this narrative a plain matter-of-fact record of incidents and episodes in the career of our brigade—which, let it be noted, was in action from August 8, when the British advance commenced, until November 4, the day of the final decisive thrust—because such an account, however poorly told, offers a picture of real war: the war that is by no means one continuous stretch of heroism and martyrdom *in excelsis*, of guns galloping to death or glory, of

bayonets dripping with enemy blood, of "our gallant lads" meeting danger and destruction with "characteristic British humour and cheerfulness," when they are not "seeing red." On that 29th of August, when Major Mallaby-Kelby assumed command, we knew that the campaign had taken a definite turn in our favour, but none of us expected the Boche to be so harried and battered that by November he would be suing for peace. And I am stating bald unimaginative facts if I say that one of the main aspirations among officers and men was to continue the advance in such a way as to make sure of decent quarters o' nights, and to drive the Germans so hard that when winter set in we should be clear of the foul mud tracts and the rat-infested trenches that had formed the battlefields of 1915, '16, and '17. Major Mallaby-Kelby was a keen pushful officer, immensely eager to maintain the well-known efficiency of the brigade while the colonel was away; but he took me into his confidence on another matter. "Look here!" he began, jocularly and with a sweeping gesture. "I'm going to ask you to make sure that the mess never runs out of white wine. It's most important. Unless I get white wine my efficiency will be impaired." I replied with due solemnity, and said that in this important matter our interpreter should be specially commissioned to scour the countryside.

By 1 P.M. it became so certain that the enemy had inaugurated a retreat that the major issued orders for the brigade to move forward three miles. We marched steadily down the valley through which Judd and Pottinger had passed on their forward-section adventure, skirted the wood that they had assisted the Divisional Infantry to recapture, and halted for further instructions west of a deserted colony of battered Nissen huts, gaping holes and broken bricks shovelled into piles, still entered on the maps as the village of G——. It would have been a truer description to paint on the sign-boards, "This was ——," as has been done at one desolate spot between Peronne and Villers Bretonneux. Along the valley we had passed were row after row of solidly-built stables left uncleaned and smelly by the fleeing Hun; rotting horses smothered with flies; abandoned trucks marooned on the few stretches of the narrow-gauge railway left whole by our shell fire. In the wood stood numerous Boche-built huts, most of them put up since the March onslaught. The Boche, dirty cur that he is, had deliberately fouled them before departing. The undulating waste land east of the wood, hallowed by memories of fierce battles in 1916, had remained untroubled until the last few weeks; and the hundreds of shell-holes, relics of 1916, had become grass-grown. Its hummocky greenness reminded one of nothing so much as a seaside golf-course.

(To be continued.)

MUSINGS WITHOUT METHOD.

FRANCE AND ENGLAND IN THE WAR—BELGIUM'S NOBLE PART—KING AND CARDINAL—THE BURGOMASTER MAX—DEVOTION AT THE OUTPOSTS—WHAT THE GOLD COAST DID—THE EXACTION OF INDEMNITIES FROM GERMANY—THE DEMAND OF THE ELECTORS—THE LETTERS OF ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE—THE TRAGEDY OF THE PINES, PUTNEY.

As we recede a few weeks from the impact of war, we may estimate, with an easier detachment than was possible before, the part that each of us has taken in the securing of victory. It is plain to us all that the hard fighting has been done in the East as in the West by the French and the English. We two, France and England, have broken the despotic power of Germany, and share the supreme honour of having saved the world from the domination of a tyrant. We may say so much without incurring a charge of arrogance. The casualty lists are there to speak for us with an eloquence which none can gainsay. How foolish appear today the malicious inventions of the Germans, who once thought it would serve their cause to pretend that the English would fight to the last Frenchman, the last Australian, or the last Canadian! We are able to-day to count the cost, and to reckon up the sacrifice. Our "hireling soldiers" have "taken their wages and are dead." Without flinching they "saved the sum of things for pay." And we may exult, with humble gratitude, in what they did and suffered for us.

Henceforth, then, France and England will stand side by side as brothers in arms. With a common courage they have fought for a common end. They know one another as loyal and familiar friends. They will strengthen the good comradeship of war in the bonds of peace. The greater knowledge which they have gained one of the other has brought with it already a closer sympathy, a quicker understanding. And so long as our alliance endures, as we hope and believe it will endure for ever, we need not fear the attack of any enemy. Together we have borne the burden of the war. It is our privilege and our duty, as of those who have made the greatest sacrifices, to bear the burden of dictating the just peace which shall secure us the future.

As in pleasant duty bound, we acclaim also the willing aid given us by our loyal and gallant Dominions, by valorous Italy, and by Serbia the indomitable. We acknowledge gratefully the moral support that was given us by the American Republic, and we are convinced that nothing can tighten the bonds which hold the Allies together more securely than a generous understanding of what each one of us has accomplished for

the common cause. Therefore, we cannot but regret that President Wilson, in his address to Congress, should have sunk the statesman so deeply in the politician as to profess an ignorance of what the British fleet achieved in transporting the American army to France. Here is his one reference to our eager co-operation in the difficult and dangerous task of bringing two million men over to Europe: "In all this movement," said he, "only 758 men were lost by enemy attack, 630 of whom were upon a single English transport, which was sunk near the Orkney Islands." That Admiral Sims is not in agreement with his President in thus slurring over the services of England, readers of this magazine will remember. Perhaps Mr Wilson's visit to Europe has given him a better appreciation of the truth.

But in the apportioning of our praise and our gratitude, there is one country which we shall never forget, and that country is Belgium. What the Belgians did and suffered will be for ever glorious. Alone and unaided they sustained the first shock of the war, and opposed with their small intrepid army the mighty force which Germany had gathered together after more than forty years of organised industry. Nor did they enter the struggle with the valour of ignorance. They were like some dwellers in the mountains, who saw a cold blue glacier encroaching ever upon their peaceful village. They were blind neither to the strength nor to the approval of their ruthless neighbour. They had watched the strategic railways of the Huns—railways which could serve but one purpose—coming nearer to them month by month. And they did not hesitate. No sooner did Austria send her fatal ultimatum to Serbia than the Belgians were on the alert. It is true that Germany, in accord with the other Powers, had guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium. But Germany had gained no high reputation as a keeper of good faith, and the Belgians were the victims of no illusion. On July 29 the Belgian Government decided to place the army on a war footing, a very necessary step, since, "owing to the small extent of her territory," to cite the words of M. Davignon, Minister of Foreign Affairs, "all Belgium consists, in some degree, of a frontier zone." On July 31st France and Germany were asked if they intended to respect Belgian neutrality. France gave her answer without wavering, and by a final act of perfidy Herr Bethmann-Hollweg declared that "Germany had no intention of violating Belgian neutrality, but he considered that in making a public declaration Germany would weaken her military position in regard to France, who, secured on the northern side, would concentrate all her energies on the east." Having given this reply of evasion to the Belgian Minister, Herr Bethmann-Hollweg refused to answer the plain question set to him by Sir

Edward Grey, and two days later Germany sent her shameful ultimatum to Belgium, bidding her choose between a free passage for German troops through her territory or instant war.

History does not contain a more disgraceful episode than this, and the excuse found for the treachery was fouler even than the treachery itself. France had plainly and willingly promised to respect Belgian neutrality, and the Germans, trained always in a school of lying, declared that there was no doubt as to the intention of France to march through Belgian territory against Germany. Of course no such intention existed, as the Germans well knew; but they wanted an excuse, and they had found it. And this was not all. If Belgium would only permit the German army to march through her country, the Germans were ready with half a dozen undertakings. They would bind themselves at the conclusion of the peace to guarantee the possessions of the Belgian kingdom in full. They would purchase all necessaries for their troops and pay cash for them, and would give an indemnity for whatever damage was done by the German army in its passage. And if Belgium refused the amicable offer, what then? Germany would be compelled to consider her as an enemy, and the eventual relations between the two States would be left to the decision of arms. The decision has been taken, with the result that Germany is broken in pieces irrecoverably, let us hope, and Belgium stands upon the very pinnacle of honourable victory.

And let it be remembered that the Belgians, unappalled by the threats of a Power whose army exceeded the whole population of Belgium, eagerly picked up the gage. Thus the gallant David answered the menace of Goliath. "The Belgian Government, if they were to accept the proposals submitted to them, would sacrifice the honour of the nation and betray their duty towards Europe. Conscious of the part which Belgium has played for more than eighty years in the civilisation of the world, they refuse to believe that the independence of Belgium can only be preserved at the price of the violation of her neutrality. If this hope is disappointed the Belgian Government are firmly resolved to repel, by all means in their power, every attack upon their rights." That note was written on August 3. On August 4 Herr Bethmann-Hollweg announced his infraction of international law, and the German troops marched into Belgium.

What happened in the meanwhile at Brussels has been disclosed to us in a vivid pamphlet by M. de Bassompierre. With a lively emotion this member of the Belgian Foreign Office describes the bustlings hither and thither, the comings and goings of those two eventful days, August 2 and 3, 1914. He tells of the King's meetings with his Ministers, of diplomatic notes received and de-

spatched, and from beginning to end he gives us a clear impression of high resolve and quiet certainty. Whatever discussion there was concerned the words of the Belgian note, not of its meaning. Never for a moment did this brave people waver. Measuring the might arrayed against it, it sent back a message of calm defiance. In a moment all discord was hushed, all the strife of parties forgotten, and the King with perfect confidence could tell his lieges that there was now "only one party, that of the Fatherland." Nor has the proud boast of M. de Broqueville—"We may be conquered, but never subdued"—been unjustified by fact. Belgium is not subdued. She has passed through the fire of suffering stronger than ever she was, and if Germany become sane, she will never hear the name of Belgium without a shudder of conscious guilt.

But in 1914 Germany, always incapable of honest pride, felt her arrogance untouched, and eight days after her first irruption into Belgium she sank so low as to repeat her assurance that she was not coming "as an enemy into Belgium," and to "beg the King of the Belgians and the Belgian Government to spare Belgium the horrors of war." The truth is, she was not getting on as fast as she wished, and she thought it no disgrace to come a second time as a wicked suppliant. The Belgian note was a note of virtue and courage. "Faithful to her international obligations"—thus it ran—"Belgium can only reiterate her reply to that ultimatum, the more so as since August 3 her neutrality has been violated, a distressing war has been waged on her territory, and the guarantors of her neutrality have responded loyally and without delay to her appeal." Germany's answer to this dignified note was German in its brutality. She replied with outrage and arson, with pillage and murder, and never, so long as our earth endures, will she wipe away the stain of blood which marks her hypocrite's hand.

Thus the Belgian soldiers stayed the oncoming tide of barbarism. In truth, they were the saviours of Europe. "A first time," says the noble Cardinal Mercier, "they saved France; a second time, in Flanders, they arrested the advance of the enemy upon Calais. France and England know it, and Belgium stands before them both, and before the whole world, as a nation of heroes." Though they were enslaved and beaten and robbed, they bore their sufferings with a marvellous patience. Defying the cruelty of the Huns, they defied also their comprehension. The Huns themselves, valiant in conquest, truckle subserviently to their conquerors, and are now busy in shifting the blame of the war from one to another. How then should they appreciate Belgium's spirit of sacrifice? Here is what Herr von Wilamovitz-Möllendorf, once professor of the Humanities, has to say about the martyred country: "See what the war

has laid bare in others! What have we learnt of the soul of Belgium? Has it not revealed itself as the soul of cowardice and assassination? . . . They have no moral forces within them, therefore they resort to the torch and the dagger." Whose word would you rather take as the word of truth—Cardinal Mercier's or Ulrich von Wilamovitz-Möllendorf's? There can be no doubt. Henceforth the professor shall not consort with honest men nor reflect upon the soul of courage and loyalty. Truly, the war has laid bare in others many things of good report, but the eyes of Wilamovitz shall not see them.

And Belgium, happy in the supreme sacrifice which unhesitating she made, has been happy also in the great men who have led her in the field of valour. Her King has given such an example of brave tranquillity as will never be forgotten. He has shared with an equal mind the sorrows and sufferings of his people. "Our King is, in the esteem of all," says Cardinal Mercier, "at the very summit of the moral scale; he is doubtless the only man who does not recognise that fact, as simple as the simplest of his soldiers, he stood in the trenches and put new courage by the serenity of his face into the hearts of those of whom he requires that they shall not doubt of their country." Thus Cardinal Mercier of his King. And what of Cardinal Mercier himself? In courage as in eloquence he stands without a rival in the war. He has faced the insolent fury of the Germans unafraid He has heartened his friends as he has dismayed his foes. The Germans did their best to break his unconquerable spirit, and retired in discomfiture from the unequal struggle. The Pastoral Letter which he addressed to his diocese at Christmas 1914 rivals in pomp and solemnity the great sermons of our own Donne. It is touched by an emotion which came not within the scope of Donne's experience. Having before his eyes the cruel martyrdom of Belgium, Cardinal Mercier admits not the possibility of regret. "Is there a patriot among us," he asks, "who does not know that Belgium has grown great? Nay, which of us would have the heart to cancel this last page of our national history? Which of us does not exult in the brightness of the glory of this shattered nation?" The nation might be shattered, but so long as it possessed such leaders as Cardinal Mercier it could not harbour a doubt of its ultimate recovery. Patriotism and endurance—these are the lessons which the Cardinal taught. Belgium had not brought the war upon herself. She was bound in honour to defend her own independence, and she kept her oath. The other powers were bound to respect her neutrality. Germany violated her oath; France and England kept theirs. And while France and England fought for the independence of Belgium, Belgium, under the rule of her gallant King and under Cardinal Mercier's guidance, gladly endured the stripes which were laid upon her.

It was no cold patient acquiescence which Cardinal Mercier enjoined upon his countrymen. He bade them not to rescind, but to exult in their first resolution. "As long as we are required to give proof of endurance," said he, "we shall endure." He did not ask them to renounce any of their national desires. "I hold it part of my episcopal office," he said, "to instruct you as to your duty in face of the Power that has invaded our soil, and now occupies the greater part of our country. The authority of that Power is no lawful authority. Therefore in soul and conscience you owe it no respect, nor attachment, nor obedience. The sole authority in Belgium is that of our King, of our Government, of the elected representatives of the nation. This authority alone has a right to our affection, our submission." And these words he spoke in the presence of the ruthless invader. But while he would persuade his compatriots to hold their heads high, he would permit no sacrifice of dignity. "Let us not take bravado for courage," said he, "nor tumult for bravery."

In enumerating the heroes of Belgium, let us not forget the gallant Burgomaster Max, who performed the humbler task allotted to him with an equal intrepidity. When the Germans entered Brussels, the Burgomaster did not for a moment forget his civic dignity. He rode at the head of the ill-omened procession, to prove that he was still master in his own house. When the German General ordered three hundred beds to be got ready in the Town Hall, "See that there are beds in the Town Hall for three hundred and one," said the Burgomaster, determined not to leave his guests. Resolutely he countered lying proclamations posted upon the walls of Brussels, by speeches delivered in the public square, and at last fell out irreparably with his persecutors on a matter of money. "I have found myself obliged," wrote the German military Governor, "to suspend Burgomaster Max from his office, on account of his unserviceable behaviour. He is now in honourable custody in a fortress." To-day, enlarged from the fortress, he is back again in Brussels, a witness of his country's glory and of the truth that Belgium's noble sacrifice has not been made in vain. Nor should we fail to record the gallantry of the soldier whose defence of Liége saved France, and who too paid for his devotion by "honourable custody in a fortress." And what can we say of the thousands of brave men who met the invader with a simple courage and fell in defence of his native land, except that "their bodies are buried in peace, but their name liveth for evermore"? Patriotism and endurance have met their due reward. Germany is humbled in the dust, and Belgium has won the laurelled crown of heroism.

When the war broke out it was the amiable hope of Germany that the dominions and colonies of Great Britain

would take the first chance that offered to throw off an unwelcome yoke. It is true that the Germans, by the adroit use of spies and missionaries, had done their best to achieve what seemed to them a desirable end. We all know to-day how loyally our dominions held fast by the bonds which bind them to the mother country. The German attempt to sow the seeds of dissension failed completely, and after four years of warfare the Empire is stronger than ever it was, for the good reason that it has been united in suffering and in victory. Our dominions, great and small, have been animated by one ambition and one desire—to do what lay in each of them to help Great Britain. That which the great ones have done is plain for us all to see. The achievements of the smaller ones may escape notice, and therefore we would take a single example, and remind our readers of what has been done by the Gold Coast, a colony which with its dependencies does not exceed 1,500,000 souls, and which, as Sir Hugh Clifford explains in a message to his Legislative Council, has shown a praiseworthy zeal and activity ever since the outbreak of the war.

Those who were privileged to fight for their country in France or elsewhere have won their reward. The deeds done in obscure corners of the Empire too often remain unknown. Yet "they also serve who only stand and wait," and the men who have upheld the burden of government at our outposts deserve all the credit that can be given to them. Great Britain does not lay down its responsibilities when it goes to war, and the double duty was laid upon our officials all the world over to thwart the far-reaching plots of Germany, and to give our dependencies the benefits of an equal rule. Of those who administer the Gold Coast, thirty per cent were released for military service. "It is hard," as Sir Hugh Clifford says, "to be compelled to carry on the dull routine of colonial duty in times like these," and there was no doubt some discontent among those whose first and last ambition it was to join the colours. But the Government could not overlook the necessities of the Public Service, and they who stayed at their post may reflect with satisfaction that they were serving their King and their Country to as good purpose, at the Gold Coast or elsewhere, as if they had fought in the trenches on the Western front.

Nor was the Gold Coast deprived of the excitement of war. As early as August 1914 the Gold Coast Regiment undertook the invasion of Togoland. The German governor surrendered the capital without a fight, and retired to Kamina, where there was a wireless station, designed to be the pivot of the whole German system of telegraphy, whence messages could be sent to Berlin on the one hand, to Windhook and Dar-es-Salam on the other. After a sharp encounter at the Chra River,

in which Lieutenant G. M. Thompson was killed, the first Englishman to give his life in the war, the wireless station was destroyed, and the Germans surrendered unconditionally. Thereafter the Gold Coast Regiment sailed from Togoland to take part in the invasion of the Kamaruns, and presently fought with great distinction in German East Africa. And it is not without a proud satisfaction that we contemplate the record of the unswerving loyalty and tireless enthusiasm of chiefs and people alike.

The Gold Coast, like other dependencies, suffered from the plots and intrigues of German merchants and German missionaries. One zealous Christian, who had been admitted into the colony to instruct the young and to preach the Gospel, was caught attempting to blow up H.M.S. *Dwarf* with an infernal machine, and pleaded, on his detection, that he was a German first and a missionary afterwards, thus affording another piece of evidence that, if ever we again admit German missionaries into a British Dependency, we shall be beset not by teachers but by spies and traitors. However, the Government of the Gold Coast knew how to deal with these miscreants and hypocrites who had abused its hospitality, and succeeded at last in ridding itself of a dangerous pest. Thus was the German danger brought vividly before the eyes of a remote colony, which not only found spies in its midst but had to lament the loss of several officials, who fell victims to German submarines. Yet never did it lose courage or lessen its energy. In the years of war its Governor is able to report a large increase of trade and industry, to report gifts of more than £60,000 to patriotic funds. Moreover, he has a useful word to say about the health of a colony which has not always been thought salubrious. "I have no hesitation," he says, "in pronouncing it the most merciful tropical climate to be met with at sea-level in any part of the heat-belt with which I am acquainted." In brief, it is impossible to read Sir Hugh Clifford's message without hope and without the glad conviction that Great Britain has done its duty to its dependencies in spite of all the calls made upon it by the war. And what has been said of the Gold Coast may be said with equal truth of the other outposts of Empire. From the loyalty and prosperity of one we may infer the loyalty and prosperity of all, and we look forward to the years which will follow the peace with confidence that, despite the politicians, we shall administer our Empire in the future with the same justice and fortitude as in the past.

The superfluous election, which has disturbed the peace of Great Britain more bitterly than the war with Germany, has revealed many things to us. It has shown us that the fear of Bolshevism is no idle fear; that there are many demagogues in the land who shout for democracy, and who are so ignorant of its principles as to declare that if they do

not get what they want by the vote they will go in for "direct action"—whatever that may mean. It has shown also that there are still many men, and even many leaders, who love the Germans with a constant heart. They would not punish our enemies for the world. Their German friends, they think, should be carefully shielded from the consequences of their misdeeds. Meanwhile Mr Asquith keeps a firm eye upon free trade, and no doubt looks forward to many years of pleasant "dumping." "When we have got reparation," he says, "we must have a clean slate. Seventy millions of people have to go on living a life of their own, and we must not forget that a place has to be found for our old enemies as well as for our friends." Perhaps it does not matter much what Mr Asquith says, but if a place has to be found for the Germans, it is not our business to find it. Then there are the Labour leaders, who are so firmly determined not to hurt the German people that they do not object one bit to hurting the English people. So they declare that Germany must be let off without payment lest the cause of internationalism should suffer, and that England must cripple herself for years with a debt which was not of her own incurring. And that is not all. There are Cabinet Ministers not a few who have suggested difficulties whenever the word "indemnity" has been mentioned, who have been content to murmur something about "the limit of Germany's capacity," and to suggest that if we are not compelled to shoulder our own liabilities ruin will stare us in the face.

But the election assuredly did one good thing. It demonstrated beyond the possibility of a doubt that the British people was not inclined to pay for Germany's breakages. The war came to us unsought, and an elementary sense of justice should convince us that it is not right to ask us to pay £400,000,000 a year, as interest upon our National Debt, merely because Germany aimed at the domination of the world. Nor is it a sound principle to say that we will not ask Germany for an indemnity, because we think that she cannot pay. Such an excuse as that, if generally accepted, would keep the most reckless spendthrift for ever out of the bankruptcy court. It is for us to formulate our demand; it will be for Germany to consider how best she may meet her liabilities. That she can pay is obvious, even for all the wanton damage that she has done, even for the vast expenditure that she has forced upon her foes. She will not, of course, pay in ready money. That would be impossible, and is undesired. But when she has replaced all the towns and factories and ships which she has destroyed in defiance of the laws of war, then it will be her duty to pay interest upon all the money which she has caused others to spend, and to create a sinking fund, so that at

last the capital debt shall be wiped off. If it take her a century to accomplish this good work, it will not be time lost; for it will teach her and others that not with impunity can an assault be made upon the liberty and the comfort of the world. It was not long before the great war, we believe, that certain German towns finished paying the loans which they had raised to satisfy the requisitions of Napoleon. Now that these requisitions are satisfied, they can begin again with a good heart upon the old plan to pay off the new debt.

If we are left without indemnity, it will mean that every year the Chancellor of the Exchequer will have to find some hundred of millions before he pays a penny for the Navy, the Army, and the public services. Taxation will remain perpetually at the high level which it has reached to-day, industry will be crippled, and the many tasks of reconstruction will never be efficiently carried out. Obviously, then, it is the duty of the Government, a duty made plain by the many pledges given at the election, to insist that Germany shall pay the costs of the war, and shall spread the payment over a long term of years. And not only does prudence impose this policy upon us and the Allies: we shall be guilty of gross injustice if we do not insist upon it. The wrong-doer must not be let off too lightly. Germany attacked Europe, because she believed that she alone was prepared for war, and that an easy victory would give her control of the world's wealth. She followed the trade of the burglar, and she must be punished severely, as a warning to others. If the Allies make an easy peace, and settle down to finding their own costs, they cannot complain if twenty years hence Germany repeats her experiment in piracy, and once more involves Europe in slaughter and misery.

And this insistence upon an indemnity will have several indirect advantages. In the first place, it will prevent Germany from piling up her armaments anew. If she is asked to pay her just debts she will have no money to lavish upon Krupp's. Nor will her fresh assault upon the trade of the world be quite so easy as she hopes it may be. She has destroyed the factories of France and Belgium with the deliberate intention of rendering the competition of these countries ineffectual. It must be the policy of the Allies, by hampering the enterprise of Germany, to ensure that France and Belgium shall recover their industries before Mr Asquith begins to find a place for "our old enemies." Therefore we must turn a deaf ear to those who plead for clemency to Germany, in the name of a hypocritical idealism. We must have no word of approval for these greedy merchants, who will not be happy until they meet their German colleagues once again across their counters. We must insist that Germany shall make good what she has destroyed, and we must leave it to her to test

her own capacity, and to find the best way of paying her just debts. If only members of Parliament keep the solemn pledges which they made at the hustings, then assuredly shall justice be done. But will they?

It is pleasant to turn from the insincerities of politicians to the sincere utterances of a poet, from the hasty offers made on the hustings by men who know they have nothing to give, to 'The Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne,'[1] who had no other wish than to tell his friends what he thought. It is Swinburne's peculiar merit that he writes always about his craft. Political philosopher as he believed himself to be, he was poet and critic before all things, and poetry and criticism are the stuff of his letters. The republicanism which he affected sat very lightly upon him. It was rather a literary pose than a conviction, and the "liberty" of which he writes with enthusiasm is for him nothing but a commonplace. He never lacked it, and since liberty is a thing which we esteem most highly by deprivation, we need not consider Swinburne's praise of it too gravely. Upon no man of his time was the freedom to think and act as he chose more lavishly bestowed. Until the ill-omened day on which he put himself into the tutelage of Theodore Watts he was uncontrolled and uncontrollable, a being of air and fire, to whom much was permitted and all forgiven. However, it was in his day the fashion to amaze the well-behaved citizen, and Swinburne sometimes fretted at the shackles which bound not himself but the poor creatures whom he despised. He delighted to strike the middle classes, then, as now, eager readers of books, with a political as well as a moral fear. And thus he gave to the world 'Poems and Ballads' and 'Songs before Sunrise,' two expressions of his literary faith. But what he said seems always less intimate to him than the manner of its saying. He was greater as an executant than as a composer, and when he tells us of 'Songs before Sunrise' that "my other books are books, that one is myself," he fails in self-knowledge.

We have said that poetry and criticism are the stuff of his letters. Incidentally, being always sincere, he reveals himself, and nobody can read the two volumes, which Mr Gosse has edited with infinite tact and restraint, without appreciating highly the writer's fine manner and courtliness. Swinburne was a gentleman always, even when a passion of contempt led him to pursue a beaten foe a little further than was necessary. Though he babbled of revolution and atheism, he had the instincts of an old-fashioned Tory. He took a proper pride in his ancient lineage and in his

[1] The Letters of Algernon Charles Swinburne. Edited by Edmund Gosse, C.B., and Thomas James Wise. London: Heinemann.

bodily prowess. He was a fearless swimmer and an expert cragsman, and he liked his friends to esteem him for the virtues of endurance and intrepidity. His distinguished and noble ancestry was no shame to him, but a source of pleasure, and there is not a hint nor a sign of the false pride that apes humility in all his letters. And not only was he a gentleman; he was a man also. An answer to some sentimental remonstrance of Ruskin, written when he was four-and-twenty, sums up admirably his decent philosophy of life. "You speak of not being able to hope enough for me," he says. "Don't you think we had better leave hope and faith to infants, adult or ungrown? You and I and all men will probably do and endure what we are destined for as well as we can. I for one am quite content to know this, without any ulterior belief or conjecture. I don't want more praise and success than I deserve, more suffering and failure than I can avoid; but I take what comes as well and as quietly as I can; and this seems to me a man's real business and only duty." These plain words sum up the whole duty of man—and remember that they were written in the midst of pre-Raphaelite sentimentality to the arch-sentimentalist of them all.

If it pleased him to pose as a revolutionary in politics, he was no revolutionary in poetry. Where his own craft was touched he had no belief in the foolish doctrine of progress. Much as he admired 'The Ring and the Book,' he would not subscribe to the praise lavished upon Browning as a poet. "Even Browning's verse always goes to a recognisable tune (I say not to a good one), but in the name of all bagpipes, what is the tune of Emerson?" Thus he writes to Mr E. C. Stedman. His appreciation and depreciation of Walt Whitman have both been misunderstood. He has been charged, unfairly, with disloyalty to an old opinion; and the truth is that, from the first, he admired what was admirable in Whitman's verse, but in spite of his lawlessness. "I daresay you agree with me," he wrote to Lord Houghton, "that his dirge or nocturne over your friend Lincoln is a superb piece of music and colour." But when the music and colour are not there, and they soon vanished, he very properly withheld his praise or uttered his blame. "When Whitman is not speaking bad prose," he wrote presently, "he sings, and when he sings at all he sings well"; and then at last he notes that "the habit of vague and flatulent verbiage seems to have grown upon him instead of decreasing." Here there is no recantation of a cherished opinion. Swinburne witnessed the decay of such power as Whitman once possessed, and said so.

Poetry, then, was his life-long delight. He applauds and condemns with equal enthusiasm. If he had not an appreciation of the finer shades, he pronounced his opinion with

equal courage and clearness. Before the shrine of his chief deity, Victor Hugo, he burns the incense of a pious worshipper. Nothing that Hugo did or said could be wrong in his eyes, and he was as fervent in idolatry as Vacquerie himself. But when he discourses of the past, with what lucidity he speaks, how justly he pronounces sentence! Mark Pattison, being a mere scholar, had condemned the drama of 'Samson Agonistes' as "languid, nerveless, occasionally halting, never brilliant." Then Swinburne comes along with the truth about the great play, "which I have often been (unfashionably and heretically) inclined to put, on the whole, at the head of all his works." Of course the poet has the better of it, but Swinburne was scholar as well as poet, and he writes of the dramatists of Shakespeare's time, for instance, with the twofold authority. How ardently he loved them, how profoundly he studied their works, is revealed here on many a page, and those who will may discover in Swinburne's letters many a wise comment on half-forgotten tragedies. Indeed, in the matter of plays his curiosity got the better of his critical faculty, and he clamoured that even the worst of them should be printed. So for many a year, with light and flowing pen, he discussed with his friends of the books which he read and the poems which he wrote. Even when we are in disagreement with him, we would not forgo his opinion. But we wish that he had not found Rochester stupid or malignant—assuredly he was neither; and we must protest against his description of Diderot's 'Neveu de Rameau' as a "black masterpiece," though he does qualify his condemnation with the other epithet "glorious."

And then suddenly Swinburne fell under the dominion, and what was infinitely worse, under the flattery, of Theodore Watts. Watts may have lengthened Swinburne's life; he certainly did not deepen it. Henceforth the imperious poet-critic saw through the eyes of Watts, and heard through his ears. He pretended to believe the criticaster to be the supreme arbiter of literary taste in Europe. He is delighted when Watts pronounces his last poem the best that ever he wrote, though, as Mr Gosse says somewhat sadly in a note, "it may be observed that Watts said this on every successive occasion." Henceforth he is not content, as of yore, to give his own opinion boldly; he must fortify it by the approval of Watts, who did him the further disservice in encouraging him to pursue the melancholy sport of flogging dead horses. But, even in his reputable servitude, the old friend of freedom breaks out now and again, and it is satisfactory to think that not even the atmosphere of the Pines, Putney, could extinguish wholly the flame of joy and enthusiasm which leapt up always in Swinburne's soul.

Printed by William Blackwood and Sons.